This Spring 2015 edition of UND’s Department of Philosophy and Religion newsletter is devoted to our amazing students, and its content is mostly based upon their experiences and achievements in the last year. As you will see in this issue, our philosophy and religion students are researchers, presenting at conferences and publishing their own papers. They are cosmopolitan world-travelers. They are musicians, and environmentalists, and political strategists. They will be doctors—both traditional and alternative—and they will be lawyers. They are social critics and city planners. Most of all, they are curious, thoughtful, and understand, as John Dewey wrote, that “education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” Throughout this newsletter, alongside their stories, you will find the words of great thinkers that inspire our students toward excellence. We thank our students for the energy, inquisitiveness, and high expectations they bring to our classes every day, and for reminding us faculty that education never ends.
“Education is a transformation, and transformations are dangerous. Processes of transformation are in part processes of destruction. To be born again one must first die... To give oneself over fully to a transformative process is to risk absolutely everything with no guarantees. In any transformative process some part of us will cease to exist.”

–Friedrich Nietzsche

(Selected by Michelle Bonapace-Potvin, Philosophy ’14)

In March, La Jaun Willis III (Philosophy, Class of ’17) was admitted into the UND McNair program, which will help him prepare for his journey towards attaining his PhD in Sociology or Public Policy.

“I want to have goblins about me, for I am courageous. The courage that scares away ghosts creates goblins for itself—courage wants to laugh.”

–Friedrich Nietzsche

(Selected by Caleb Faul, Philosophy ’16)

Hannah Bahnmiller (Philosophy minor alumna, Class ’14) has recently been accepted into Cornell University’s City and Regional Planning program. The program pairs obtaining a Masters of Regional Planning with a 2-year volunteer/research experience with the Peace Corps. She is also presenting her philosophy directed reading (with Dr. Lucian Stone) paper: “Neoliberalism and Its Implications for Uneven Development,” at the Association of American Geographers conference (April 2015) in Chicago. Finally, she is having one of her other philosophy papers, “The Intersections between Self-Deception and Inconsistency: An Examination of Bad Faith and Cognitive Dissonance,” (originally written for Dr. Rozelle-Stone’s ‘Phenomenology’ course) published in Stance: An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal (Vol. 8, Spring 2015).

Gary Suchor (Philosophy, Class of ’16) will be presenting his paper, “The Fetishized Consumption of Spectacles and the Death of Reality,” at the Pacific University Undergraduate Conference, April 17-18, 2015. He is also the honored recipient of UND English Department’s Fall 2014 “Evelyn Sundry Himes Scholarship” which was established in 1990 to recognize above average students who show proficiency in the field of English. Gary also was a student volunteer at UND’s 46th Annual Writers Conference, “The Other Half.”

Brittany Borgen (Religion, ’16) is currently a member of several honorary societies, including: the Mortar Board Board National College Senior Honor Society, the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, the Theta Alpha Kappa National Religion Honor Society, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, and the Golden Key International Honor Society.

Molly Burke (Philosophy and Ethics minor, Class of ‘15) holds several prestigious positions within the university. She is the President of Kappa Alpha Theta (2014), a member of Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society, a Student Senator, a University Senator, a UND Truman Scholarship candidate, and a student lobbyist for Fraternal Government Relations Coalition. She has received the Dr. Ronald Pynn Scholarship for students interested in serving underrepresented groups, and she is a Becraft Scholar, representing UND at a conference on U.S. affairs at West Point. Finally, she has recently served as an intern for Senator Heidi Heitkamp.

Carlie Hughes (Philosophy, Class of ’15) will be presenting her paper, “Why Phenomenology is Necessary for the Deep Ecology Movement,” at the Pacific University Undergraduate Conference this April 17-18, 2015. She is also the founder and President of the Students for Sustainability Club. As a part of that organization, she will be assisting with an Earth Day event this semester held in the Loading Dock from 10 am-2 pm on April 22nd.
More Student Activities and Accomplishments

Michelle Bonapace-Potvin (Philosophy, Class of ’14) has recently been accepted into UND’s School of Medicine and Health Sciences and McGill University’s Masters Program in Biomedical Ethics. She is currently in the process of deciding which path to pursue. In the meantime, Michelle has been interning non-stop at her local hospital (Centre de santé et de services sociaux de Rouyn-Noranda) and coaching little pee wee’s in hockey (who are the regional champs). This summer she will be in Italy for 3 weeks visiting family, and then visiting friends in Oslo, Greece, and Paris.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
–Martin Luther King, Jr. (Selected by Molly Burke, Philosophy ’15)

Benjamin Davis (Philosophy, Class of ’16): is presenting several papers this semester at national conferences, including: “Imaginative Response-ability: The Role of Literature in the New Humanitarianism,” at Teachers College, Columbia University, March 19, 2015; “Toward Attentive Companionship: The Poetry and Praxis of Simone Weil and Gustavo Gutiérrez” at the 35th Annual Colloquy of the American Weil Society, April 24-25, Lesley University.; “Love and Liberation: Openness to God in Postmodernity,” Midwestern Undergraduate Philosophy Conference, Creighton University, April 10-11, 2015, and at SUNY Oneonta Philosophy Conference, April 17-18, 2015; and “North Dakota Principals: A Study in Rural Educational Leadership,” Scholarly Forum, University of North Dakota, March 10, 2015. He has also just been notified that one of his philosophy papers (written for Dr. Lucian Stone’s ‘Continental Philosophy’ class) will be published: “Love and Liberation: Openness to God in Postmodernity” in Philologoi: The Belmont University Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy, to come out in Autumn 2015. Ben visited Washington D.C. for the ONE Power Summit, due to his being founder and President of ONE at UND. Lastly, Ben will be presenting his Honors thesis on the philosophies of education of John Dewey and Paulo Freire in April at the Undergraduate Research Conference at UND.

Caleb Faul’s (Philosophy, Class of ’16) paper, “Playing with Technology,” was accepted at the 20th Annual Undergraduate philosophy conference at SUNY Oneonta, April 17-18, 2015. Throughout the AY 2014-15, Caleb is also working as Dr. Lucian Stone’s undergraduate research assistant on a forthcoming book tentatively entitled, Palestinians vs. Zombies. In December of 2014, he also performed the third movement of Mozart’s 20th piano concerto with the Greater Grand Forks Symphony Orchestra, and he will be going to Japan in May as part of the Red River Trio.

“Recognize your rights. The powerful empire of nature is no longer surrounded by prejudice, fanaticism, superstition, and lies. The torch of truth has dispersed all the clouds of folly and usurpation.”
–Olympe de Gouges (Selected by Brittany Borgen, Religion ’16)

Lawrence Philbin (Philosophy minor, Class of ’15) was accepted into all six law schools to which he applied: University of Minnesota, University of Iowa, Lewis and Clark, Denver University, Seattle University, and William-Mitchell. He has just decided to commit to the University of Minnesota School of Law, and was offered a generous merit-based scholarship to attend.

Recent Philosophy and Religion Club Events

December 10, 2014
Orientalism and the ‘Authentic Homosexual’
Michelle Bonapace-Potvin

February 12, 2015
Environmentalism: Ethic or Ideology?
Gary Suchor

March 10, 2015
Tolkien and Trees:
Environmentalism in The Lord of the Rings
Benjamin Davis

Phi Sigma Tau
(Philosophy Honor Society)
Officers 2014-2015:
President: Gary Suchor
Vice President: Benjamin Davis
Secretary: Caleb Faul
Treasurer: Carlie Hughes
Most of us, no matter what we say, are walking in the dark, whistling in the dark. Nobody knows what is going to happen to him from one moment to the next, or how one will bear it. This is irreducible. And it's true of everybody. Now, it is true that the nature of society is to create, among its citizens, an illusion of safety; but it is also absolutely true that the safety is always necessarily an illusion. Artists are here to disturb the peace.”

–James Baldwin
(Selected by Carlie Hughes, Philosophy ’16)
A SEMESTER STUDYING IN SOUTH KOREA

By: La Jaun Willis III
Philosophy, Class of ’17

Last semester (Fall 2014), I studied abroad in South Korea. I chose South Korea because in my previous semester I was learning about the impact of social and cultural norms on the lives of individuals. So I wanted to pick a country with completely different cultural norms than mine to see how I would respond, and what new life lessons I could gather from it.

South Korean culture had some similarities to American culture, but it often felt like I was living in a twilight zone, and the experience of arriving in this country was like entering the world for the first time. The transition into South Korean culture was surprisingly easy at first, difficult midway through, and easy again towards the end. One of the biggest differences I noticed was the concept of independence. Almost everything was done in groups in South Korea. My friend-group treated me as if I was family. This concept was even built into the language. When addressing a friend older than me, I was expected to call them “big brother” or “big sister” in Korean.

Before I departed for South Korea everyone kept telling me I was going to love their public transportation. Personally, I thought that was the weirdest thing to say because all I had on my mind was the new delicious food I was going to try. Though, looking back, I found that they were right! I miss South Korea’s subway almost more than anything. I was living in one of the biggest cities in the world (Seoul), and could go just about anywhere extremely fast for under five dollars! So, naturally I tried to do everything from trying South Korean delicacies to visiting Buddhist temples built into the sides of mountains.

The type of education that I received was also one of my highlights. All my classes were taught in English, and they had a fair level of difficulty to them. The first few weeks were trying, because I was not used to the professors’ teaching styles, but I later found this to my advantage. The difference in style challenged me to think in a way that I never had before. In the courses I took, the U.S. came up a lot, and I gained a completely new perspective on my country.

I can honestly say that my study abroad experience was one of the most fun and eye-opening things that I have ever experienced. Three months later I still find myself reflecting, and growing from what I experienced in South Korea. I highly recommend that everyone study abroad at least once in college.

“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

–Friedrich Nietzsche
(Selected by Gary Suchor, Philosophy ’16)
Alumni Spotlight:
Brandilyn Binstock
Philosophy, Class of ’14

When I enrolled at UND in August 2009, my initial goal was to apply to and attend allopathic medical school. Although my path deviated from the traditional Pre-Health studies, as topics of philosophy and religion captured my attention, in fall 2013 I applied to UND’s School of Medicine and Health Sciences (UNDSMHS). I was invited to interview in the winter of 2013. During the time I was waiting to hear back from UNDSMHS, I was introduced to the naturopathic medical track by a UND wellness yoga instructor, who was accepted to the National College of Natural Medicine in the fall of 2014. I was aware of the osteopathic medical track and began researching the philosophy it is based on, but this was the first time I had ever heard of the naturopathic medical schooling. I have always gravitated toward natural or alternative healing techniques. (Growing up, I did not have a primary care physician, but rather a primary care chiropractor who was one of the most intelligent individuals I have ever met. He was able to treat, relieve, and advise me in all aspects of my life.)

After discussing naturopathic medical school with the yoga instructor, I knew that this was the type of healer I was, a natural healer. For me, naturopathic medicine provides the opportunity to offer thorough medical care coupled with sincere attentiveness to those suffering, a topic I studied through the writings of the Christian mystic and philosopher, Simone Weil. Studying and practicing naturopathic medicine will not only give me the opportunity to embrace my interest in the medical sciences, but also embody the philosophies of caring that captured my attention in UND’s Philosophy and Religion Department.

In May 2014, I graduated from UND with a Bachelor of Science in Biology/Pre-Health and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. In June 2014, I moved to Fargo, ND, and began working as a cardiac monitor technician at a local hospital. Further, I attended a course to receive my YogaFit level I instructor license. I began shadowing local naturopathic doctors and was offered the position as a medical assistant in a local naturopathic practice. Immediately I was inspired by the time, attentiveness, and deep-rooted, genuine compassion each doctor offered their patients. They considered and investigated all aspects of their patients’ lives.

In December 2014 I was invited to interview at the naturopathic medical schools I applied to, and in January 2015 I accepted a position into the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine program at Bastyr University in Seattle, WA.

Although my specialty may evolve once I begin experiencing new dimensions of medicine through the naturopathic philosophy and practice, past and present experiences have already shaped my perspective and have given me insight into the branches of medicine in which I have special interests. One of the primary experiences that shaped my current perspective was my involvement in immunological research at UND. Further, my experiences as a cardiac monitor technician shape my special interests in cardiac disease. Studying the intricate electrophysiology of the cardiac musculature and nervous system through the medium of ECG readings and learning about traditional treatments within cardiology has helped develop my understanding of the heart, and further, has increased my curiosity in studying the efficacy of alternative naturopathic medical treatments integrated with lifestyle changes (namely, veganism) versus traditional allopathic approaches. I also hope to incorporate aspects of the ancient Indian healing philosophies of Ayurveda into my medical practice.

The way I perceive the world and myself underwent a complete metamorphosis while I attended the University of North Dakota, and I will be forever grateful to have stumbled into an introduction to Ethics class my sophomore year.

“Truth emerges from silence.”

–Simone Weil
(Selected by Benjamin Davis, Philosophy ’16)
“We have to break with our mental categories, with the way we relate to others, with our way of identifying with the Lord, with our cultural milieu, with our social class, in other words, with all that can stand in the way of a real, profound solidarity with those who suffer.”

–Gustavo Gutiérrez
(Selected by Benjamin Davis, Philosophy ’16)

Help Support the Department of Philosophy & Religion

Now is a critical time for funding in the humanities—especially programs like Philosophy and Religion. For our department to continue to provide experiences to undergraduates befitting of an “Exceptional UND”—such as the amazing accomplishments of our students recorded in this special edition of our newsletter—we need your help. Please consider giving a gift to the UND Department of Philosophy and Religion to support and strengthen our commitment to teaching, research, and special events like lecture series and educational trips for our students. Gifts ensure that we have the most talented, dedicated faculty and the best facilities and resources available to educate future lawyers, academics, teachers, doctors, researchers, entrepreneurs, journalists, social workers, and community, state, and national leaders in a variety of fields.

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Meet Paula Cox

Where are you from, originally, and where did you grow up?
I grew up in East Grand Forks and moved to Grand Forks in 1986.

How long have you been working at UND? What does a typical day at work look like for you now?
May 3rd will be one year at UND. I work for three different departments in Merrifield and incorporate a little of each of them in my day. I am the Subscriptions Manager for the North Dakota Quarterly and work there Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. I help out with the Languages Department, and I am the Administrative Assistant for the Philosophy and Religion Department where I spend the majority of my day and where I handle the budget for the department and answer any questions the students or faculty may have.

Do you have family in the area?
Yes. Most of my family lives in the area. My mother, my four children, and two granddaughters live here, along with my aunt and uncle. I have a sister that lives near International Falls and numerous relatives that live in Nebraska.

I am very blessed that my immediate family does live in town so that I may spend quality time with them.

What are some of your favorite books, music, and films?
This question poses some difficulty for me. I have so many favorites. I listen to all genres of music from country to classical, and I truly love anything that moves me. This pertains to all the categories listed above. I love reading books and watching movies that are based on true events. I would have to say one of my favorite movies I have watched recently is The Theory of Everything, and one of my favorite books was If I Stay by Gayle Forman. Having teenage daughters, I do read a lot of the books they read first to make sure of what they are reading and also to keep up with what interests them.

What do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?
I love spending time with my family, running, gardening, bike riding and just enjoying life.

Is there anything else you want us to know about you?
I enjoy learning new things and meeting new challenges.
For more information visit the Department of Philosophy and Religion website: http://arts-sciences.und.edu/philosophy-religion/

Also, join the Department of Philosophy and Religion Group Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/526547234057354/