Connecting the Social Atoms
Building Philosophical Community with Berkeley Connect

This fall will be the department’s sixth semester offering Berkeley Connect courses. These courses aim to strengthen ties with a department by providing academic mentoring.

As Professor Lara Buchak, director of the program in philosophy, explains, “Berkeley Connect has three main goals in the philosophy department: to foster students’ connections with each other, with graduate students, and with professors; to help students understand and reflect on philosophy as a discipline; and to give students more personal attention from a mentor.”

This past spring, eighty-six students enrolled in the department’s six Berkeley Connect sections. The sections are run by three Graduate Fellows selected for their history as excellent teachers. Students attend a mix of small group meetings on topics such as “What is philosophy?” and “Philosophical examples and thought experiments,” as well as large group meetings featuring sessions on how to write a philosophy paper and panels on philosophy as a career.

Berkeley Connect student Carli Tipson describes the philosophy career panel as “very useful.” “It was a cool opportunity to see some of my professors talk about their lives before grad school and hear about different paths people took to getting where they are now as philosophers.”

Melissa Fusco, who taught for four semesters as a Graduate Fellow, reports having excellent teaching experiences in Berkeley Connect. “I’ve just had some great students! Students who jumped up and grabbed the chalk to correct my time-travel diagrams, students who emailed me after class for extra readings on particular topics, students who shared intellectually challenging and puzzling experiences in their own lives, students who helped me schlep pizza over great distances—there is free pizza in Berkeley Connect!”

Students in philosophy also attend events outside the classroom. These include “field trips” to department colloquia and to the Bancroft Library, as well as “study breaks” where they socialize with philosophy professors and graduate students over snacks.

For Graduate Student Fellows, the program provides a unique opportunity to practice mentorship skills. “Berkeley Connect is great,” says second semester Fellow Eugene Chislenko, “The program is great training for grad students to think about our students as people, and create welcoming interactive environments. We try to do that anyway, but it’s very different having that be your main task for the semester. It’s something I’ll always keep with me when I teach other courses.”

The help of a graduate mentor can make a big difference. Berkeley Connect student Julia Rose raises one example. “All semester I felt like I couldn’t apply to a summer program because I didn’t know any professors well enough to ask them for recommendation letters. One day in BConnect I mumbled out how bummed I was and how I wished I could apply in the middle of a thousand other thoughts in a rambling stream of consciousness and Eugene caught on to that piece of my rambles. He gave me advice that made it possible to get recommendation letters and when I thought it might not happen, he offered to write one himself. I applied to the program thanks to Eugene and I know him thanks to Berkeley Connect.”

Professor Buchak expects even more students to enroll in the department’s program this fall. Many will be experiencing the Berkeley campus for the first time as junior transfers. With half of all philosophy majors entering as junior transfers, Berkeley Connect offers an excellent opportunity to welcome them to our philosophical community.

For more on Berkeley Connect in philosophy, read Myron Liu’s winning entry to the Berkeley Connect Student Voice Contest at http://www.blog-berkeleyconnect.berkeley.edu/?p=1044.
The two years since the last edition of our newsletter have been eventful. This year we are delighted to welcome two new colleagues, Shamik Dasgupta and Kristin Primus. Their appointments fill longstanding gaps in our coverage of metaphysics, the philosophy of science, and early modern philosophy. Joshua Cohen has also joined us as a Distinguished Senior Fellow in Law, Political Science, and Philosophy. Barry Stroud and Janet Broughton have retired after long and distinguished careers at Berkeley. Stroud will continue his research, advising, and teaching as Professor in the Graduate School. Broughton, who won both divisional and campus-wide awards this year for her distinguished record of service to campus, most recently as Vice Provost for the Faculty, plans to dive back into her book on Hume. Finally, while we were successful in retaining Niko Kolodny and Lara Buchak in the face of strong offers by NYU, MIT, and USC, we very much regret that Klaus Corcilius will be leaving Berkeley to take up a Professorship at the University of Tübingen.

Our graduate program continues to thrive. Though the academic job market never rebounded after the recession, we have had some notable successes in placement. We have initiated a new series of informal lunchtime work-in-progress talks, and we are in the midst of a large project to renovate 301 Moses, the graduate student lounge and office area, to better suit the range of activities it supports. The new room will include a kitchenette that we hope will serve as a focal point for informal interactions between faculty and graduate students. Interest in our undergraduate major is still very high, and preliminary signs indicate that we may have a record number of majors this year. A large proportion of our majors are transfers from community colleges, so we have been taking steps to ease their transition to the very different academic environment of Berkeley. We are continuing our participation in Berkeley Connect, we have started a new peer tutoring program, and we are planning additional events to help new transfer students get integrated into the department. We have also begun working with the Urban Scholars program, which helps formerly incarcerated students and veterans make the transition into academic life.

As I wrap up my term as Chair, I am more proud than ever to be associated with this department and this university. Cal is one of the strongest forces I know for combating inequality. Twenty-eight percent of Berkeley undergraduates are Pell Grant recipients. Over half of our majors transferred from community colleges. The New York Times’ College Access Index, which rates colleges by how they do in fostering upward mobility, is completely dominated by UC schools. What makes these access statistics more remarkable is that Berkeley provides an elite education. To a large extent, we have the faculty that Harvard, Princeton, Oxford, NYU, and MIT wanted, and the graduate students who play such a crucial role in our undergraduate education will be tomorrow’s professors at Columbia, Chicago, and Michigan. It is this combination of access and elite status that really sets Berkeley apart. But this is not an easy combination to maintain, especially given the large decline in state support for our university in the past two decades. What makes it possible is the dedication of our faculty, students, and staff, the support of departmental funds endowed by previous generations of philanthropists, and help from today’s generous donors. We very much hope you will consider making a contribution online: a secure link can be found from our departmental website (http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/give). We thank you for your continued support, and we would welcome hearing about your own activities.

Shamik Dasgupta, currently an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University, joins the department in Fall 2016. He received a B.Sc. in Biology from University College London and an M.Phil. in Philosophy from King’s College London before earning his Ph.D. in Philosophy from NYU. Dasgupta is a specialist in metaphysics and the philosophy of science; his work explores how symmetry considerations can be used to argue for metaphysical conclusions about spacetime, individuals, and quantities.

Kristin Primus, currently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University, joins the department in Fall 2016. She received a B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy, as well as an M.A. in Humanities, from Stanford University. Primus studied for a year as a pensionnaire étranger at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris before earning her Ph.D. in Philosophy from Princeton University. Primus is a specialist in early modern philosophy, particularly Leibniz and Spinoza.
Joshua Cohen joined Berkeley in 2015 as a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the School of Law, the Department of Philosophy, and the Charles and Louise Travers Department of Political Science in the College of Letters and Science. A specialist in political philosophy, he has written extensively on issues of democratic theory, freedom of expression, religious freedom, political equality, and global justice. His recent books include Philosophy, Politics, Democracy (Harvard University Press, 2009); Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals (Oxford University Press, 2010); and The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays (Harvard University Press, 2011). He is on the faculty at Apple University and spends one day each week at Berkeley running a workshop that brings in outside speakers to present works-in-progress in legal, moral, and political philosophy.

New Graduate Students 2015-2016

2015
Greyson Abid – B.A. University of Pennsylvania
Blake Harper – B.A. Middlebury College
Jennifer Marsh – B.A., M.A. University of Pennsylvania
Emily Perry – B.A. McGill University, M.A. University of Toronto
Zachary Stout – B.A. Reed College
Alberto Tassoni – B.A. University College London

2016
Mathias Boehm – B.A. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Urte Laukaityte – B.A. University of Edinburgh
Matthew McCauley – B.A. UNC Chapel Hill
Sven Neth – B.A. Free University of Berlin
Patrick Ryan – B.A. Harvard University
Pia Schneider – B.A. LMU Munich

New Directions Fellowship

The department now offers the New Directions Fellowship to help its graduate students gain a better footing in the sciences. One student is awarded the fellowship each year to pursue coursework in the sciences relevant to their philosophical research and collaborate with a mentor working in the sciences. At the end of the fellowship, students and mentors present their work to the department in a colloquium.

Two graduate students, Alex Kerr and Rachel Rudolph, have now completed the fellowship. Kerr worked with Stephen Palmer, Professor of Psychology, on a project about spatial perception, focusing on some unresolved issues raised by much-discussed psychological experiments. In the experiments, subjects wore prisms over their eyes that reversed the left-right orientation of their retinal images. At first, subjects couldn’t do much of anything. But, after a while, they could once again do some impressive things—walk, ride a bike, ski. It’s widely reported that, along with their return to normal behavior, subjects returned to “normal vision”: things appeared to the subjects just how they used to, before the experiment. But close inspection of existing experiments shows at best conflicting evidence for this claim. Kerr and Palmer tried to design experiments to get better evidence about how things look to subjects wearing the prisms. They also explored the significance of the possible results for philosophical theories of spatial perception.

Rachel worked with Line Mikkelsen, from the Linguistics department, on a project about the language of appearance and evaluation. The project jumped off from recent work in linguistics and philosophy of language about a class of evaluative terms called “predicates of personal taste” (for example, “tasty” and “fun”). The meaning of these predicates seems to have both subjective and objective elements, and these are challenging to reconcile. The main goal of Rudolph’s New Directions project was to explore how this challenge posed by evaluative language also comes up with the language we use to talk about appearances (such as how things look, taste, sound, feel, and smell). Under Mikkelsen’s mentorship, she worked towards a syntactic and semantic analysis of the language of appearance that unifies it with the past work on predicates of personal taste. Although many open questions remain about the language in both domains, they believe that this unified approach can offer insight not available to those focused only on evaluative language.

Dylan Murray is the latest recipient of the fellowship. His faculty mentor is David Harding in Sociology, who works mainly on “neighborhood effects.” Murray is planning on taking Harding’s graduate-level statistics course and Martin Sanchez-Jankowski’s graduate seminar Sociology of Poverty. Murray hopes that working with Harding will solidify the fifth chapter of his dissertation, which is about how situations partly created by implicit biases can be coercive/manipulative (even though these effects weren’t intended). He wants to confirm that the empirical evidence in urban sociology bears that out, and if so, see what it can tell us about the causal mechanisms subserving that effect.

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The Limits of Science
By John Campbell

In Shakespeare’s Othello there’s a bit where Othello has to explain how it can have happened that a nice girl like Desdemona threw in her lot with a rough type like him. The court feel that only sorcery or drugs can explain how this happened, and the general feeling is that if that’s so, executing Othello would be about right as a response. Othello has to convince the court it wasn’t that way, and describes how he used to tell Desdemona about his troubled life, from being sold into slavery to his adventures among the Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders. He says that this awoke Desdemona’s pity, which in turn gave rise to love: “She loved me for the dangers I had pass’d, And I loved her that she did pity them.” This grabs the imagination of the court, they see how it would have been from Desdemona’s perspective, and that is enough to get Othello more or less literally off the hook.

This example illustrates a number of points about our imaginative understanding of one another, our ability to get into one another’s heads, to see things from the perspective of another.

1. Empathy or imagination can be a matter of significant practical importance: it’s only through their imaginative understanding of Desdemona that the court acquits Othello. This seems to be a general point about social life: that a lot hangs practically on imaginative understanding. You can lose your friendship with someone because you saw exactly what the brute was thinking when you lost your job, for example.

2. Empathy or imagination can yield the highest level of certainty about someone else’s feelings or motives: “beyond all reasonable doubt,” as they say in the law. Such a lot turns, in our own personal lives and in the law, on questions about people’s motives and feelings. And we assume that our ordinary imaginative understanding of them yields definitive knowledge: good enough for us to bet our lives on it being right, sentencing people to death, or falling in love, on the basis of our imaginative understanding of one another.

3. Understanding by "getting inside someone’s head," imagining the world from their point of view, seems to be a quite different enterprise from understanding that person scientifically. I suppose Othello could have taken a different tack, and approached Desdemona’s case from the standpoint of a social scientist who knows about the factors that generally cause a healthy love in people of her type, and demonstrating that they were present in her case. But that isn’t what he does, and the vivid evocation he gives of her state of mind, with its detail and particularity, seems antithetical to a scientific approach.

4. Even though it’s not scientific, Othello’s point has to do with causation: he has to establish that the cause of Desdemona’s love was pity, rather than sorcery or drugs. So he’s establishing a point about causation through the evocation of imaginative understanding, with enough practical certainty to determine a matter of life or death, otherwise than through the use of science. We tend to think of science as the authority of choice over questions of cause and effect, but this case shows that this isn’t always so, and in fact that it isn’t so in a kind of case that matters to us all, every day of our lives.

There are actually many more philosophically interesting points to be drawn from this example—for instance, in the larger context of the play, there’s a point to be made about the limitations of our imaginative understanding of one another, Othello’s imaginative understanding of Desdemona is in fact somewhat more restricted than he realizes—but I think that is enough morals to be going on with. The general point is that our imaginative understanding of one another seems to generate some kind of definitive knowledge that really matters. Is this something that could in principle be duplicated by science? That is, could science give us knowledge of the facts that we ordinarily know through our imaginative understanding of one another? Or is it a limitation of science, that while it can tell us about many deep and unexpected phenomena, it simply can’t cover the things we know about through imagination?

If science is limited in this way, then it’s a big limitation. I said that the knowledge we have through imaginative understanding is practically important. In fact, you could argue that in the end, it’s only this kind of knowledge that has any kind of fundamental practical importance. The phenomena that physics, for example, deals with—quasars, gamma ray bursts, gluons—don’t matter in themselves, they matter only because of their impacts on the subjective lives of which we have an imaginative understanding.

It’s also surprising if science is limited in this way. We have got used to the idea that what seem like insanely ambitious scientific projects can really be carried out, we can send probes to Jupiter, find out what happened in the Big Bang and so on. Does it really make sense to suppose that there’s some of the world that resists scientific explanation?

Let’s look some more at what people have said about the contrast between imaginative understanding of one another and scientific explanation. In analytic philosophy the simplest, sharpest statement of the contrast was given by Thomas Nagel. Suppose you’re trapped in a barn with an excited bat and enthralled by the question what its subjective experience is like. Nagel’s point was that no amount of hard science will provide you with that information. You can pull the bat apart cell by cell, for example, and develop a complete computational account of how it’s responding to the physical structures and forces
around it, and still have no idea what its experience is like. Nagel put his main point like this:

At present we are completely unequipped to think about the subjective character of experience without relying on imagination— without taking up the point of view of the experiential subject. (Nagel, “What is It Like to be a Bat?”, 449)

It’s only imaginative understanding that provides our knowledge of what is actually going on with one another’s subjective experiences. Ordinarily we do know about one another’s subjective lives, and from a practical point of view, that is certainly the most important knowledge we have—does anything else matter at all, except insofar as it bears on this? And this knowledge cannot be supplied by hard science, in the case of humans any more than in the case of bats. It is supplied by imaginative understanding.

Now of course there’s a sense in which you might say this contrast between imaginative understanding and scientific explanation is overdrawn. There are after all the “soft” sciences, that actually depend on our empathetic understanding of one another, such as social psychology. Suppose you’re interested in voting behavior, for example. Why do some people vote for one political party and others for another? Here you might appeal to factors like identity—which groups (ethnic, cultural, regional) does the voter identify with? Now social scientists do their best to reduce the dependence on empathetic understanding in their methodology here, so that their interviewers are merely using checklists of verbal responses to interview questions, for example, when sorting people into the groups with which they self-identify. But there inevitably is some element of imaginative understanding required in the interpretation of those verbal responses, in understanding them as locating the identities of the subjects. So while a scientific methodology can be used at the level of the community, in establishing the general truths applying to the psychologies of its members, this ultimately depends on the use of imaginative understanding in interpreting the individuals who are sampled in the observational or experimental studies.

The real question is whether the facts revealed by imaginative understanding of individual people could have been got at by the “hard” sciences, that is, those that don’t depend at all on imaginative understanding. Now let me say right away that I don’t think there is the slightest reason to believe that this is or should be possible. But this answer has a lot of implications that are disturbing for the ways in which people today tend to view the role of science in our knowledge. I think it’s generally assumed that in principle, science will give us comprehensive coverage of everything there is, without any dependence on imaginative understanding.

I think the main reason for this is that it’s natural to oscillate between what we might call “formal” and “concrete” conceptions of science. On a “formal,” or empty, conception of science, anything at all that might constitute evidence for or against any proposition is counted as “science.” Certainly I myself was for a long time skeptical about any argument about the “limits” of science, on the grounds that anything that would be established to exist, on whatever basis, would be grist for the mill. Scientists after all would be simply delighted if, for example, some non-physical stuff could be established to exist—something not made out of anything like the currently recognized particles and forces—and would devote considerable resources to finding out about it. Science is, after all, merely the practice of thinking rationally about what’s there. How could there be anything that lies outside its scope?

On the other hand, the fact is that all know fairly well what we’re talking about when we talk about science. We’re talking about the radical program of explaining nature in terms of measurable aspects of fundamental atoms and mechanical forces that was begun in the 17th century, and continues today with the international system of scientific units, the fundamental forces and particles of the Standard Model, and the periodic table. The program has of course gone through a great deal of development since the 17th century, but it’s recognizably the same program.

Now the main point about this program that was begun in the 17th century is that it was crazily ambitious. Try to think yourself back to the position of a medieval peasant. Nowadays, every 8-year old knows that matter is made of particles. But back then this was merely a conjecture. And the idea of explaining everything in mathematical terms, which is so central to science, is very unobvious. Suppose, from your standpoint as a medieval peasant, you wonder how trees grow and propagate. Should you try to answer this in mathematical terms? Well, you could measure some trees. You could count them. But it seems perfectly obvious that this kind of thing is not going to get you very far. It might well seem to be a better idea just to think really hard about the qualitative aspects of trees, perhaps in the company of Aristotle. A zealot who insists that well, we can explain everything about the growth and propagation of trees in terms of mathematical properties of their invisible parts might reasonably be greeted with considerable skepticism. The amazing thing about this program is that it’s been so successful, well beyond anything that could reasonably have been anticipated by its founders. Area after area has succumbed to the general approach. Now when a program is successful, it’s natural to suppose that it will go on being successful. “Area after area has succumbed. Therefore, all areas will succumb to the general approach.” But, of course, there really isn’t a reason to suppose that this crazily ambitious program must be successfully applied to absolutely everything. We know about how the mind works, what causes what in the mind, through our imaginative understanding of it. And there may simply be no way of getting at these phenomena through the crazily ambitious program. This may just be a limitation of the program. There may just be some phenomena, such as those we access through imaginative understanding, that resist scientific analysis.

We might here draw a comparison with the question, “Why should I be moral?” On one, “formal” conception of it, morality simply encompasses everything that might be reckoned as a reason for doing one thing rather than another, and the idea that there might be practical considerations outside the scope of morality makes no sense. On the other hand, we all have a more concrete conception of “morality” on which we know perfectly well that it has a number of quite specific recommendations for action: that we should all treat each other well and fairly, that you shouldn’t be mean, and so on. On this more concrete conception of it, morality is certainly open to critique, for example as being no more than an expression of timidity and weakness. On this concrete conception of it, it would certainly be possible to find directives for practical action that are outside of morality.

Incidentally, the concept of “objectivity” can be incredibly confusing here. On one way of using it, “objectively true” just means the same as “true.” Everything true is “objectively” true. There aren’t any truths that aren’t objective truths.
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Philosophy Commencement  
2015–2016

Each year, the department invites one graduating senior and one alumnus/a of the department to address the graduating seniors at the department commencement. The following are excerpts from the addresses delivered in 2015 and 2016.

From Khang Ton, 2015 Undergraduate Speaker:
Throughout the course of my studies, I have been introduced to countless philosophical puzzles, from free will to the mind-body problem, from the Euthyphro dilemma to the liar’s paradox, to problems about identity, brains in a vat, Buridan’s ass, and the list goes on. But I’d like to think that philosophy is not just a set of puzzles.

When asked “Why study philosophy?” we often talk about the power of these philosophical puzzles to stimulate thoughts, sharpen our critical thinking skills, to preserve our childlike sense of wonder, and to tear us from the shackles of dogmatism and prejudice.

It is undeniably true that philosophy provides us with such benefits; and they are perfectly legitimate reasons to study philosophy, but I think they fail to explain why we have a craving for philosophy in the first place. What I find even more puzzling than all the philosophical problems I’ve just mentioned is our readiness to plunge headlong into this abyss of ideas and abstractions. We ruthlessly scrutinize our own beliefs. We ask hard questions and scorn easy answers. We marvel at what we think are the most fundamental questions in life, questions that even we believe may not have a definite answer, and yet we continue to throw ourselves into confusion in trying to answer them. Often, what we get out of it is just a kind of intellectual dizziness which only leads us to come back for more. But sometimes, what we get is clarity and moments of sheer intellectual ecstasy.

…Aristotle said that “all human beings by nature desire to know.” Could this be a mere brute fact? Or should we try to explain to ourselves why we crave philosophy? I think this is a question that should be of immense interest to all of us here.

But perhaps the more urgent question now is not why we do philosophy, but how we ought to do it. This is a question that we, the class of 2015, must now face as we ponder life after graduation. If it is by virtue of our nature as questioning beings that we are condemned to philosophize, then we must do so responsibly.

As critical as we should be when trying to answer some of the most difficult questions in life, I think it is equally important that we approach these questions with an attitude of love and care for one another; because sometimes you might forget that others are struggling just as much as you are.

…While we should always passionately defend our virtues, we must at the same time have the willingness to admit that we can be mistaken even about our most cherished beliefs and values. We often say that we have to be humble when doing philosophy. I think this is much easier said than done. Sometimes we are not humble. This is natural, however, because the recognition of our mistakes often leaves us completely vulnerable. It hurts how we struggle so hard only to find that we were wrong. These are moments when we lose our grip on what is at stake, when we become disoriented.

But I think this experience of disorientation only urges us to abandon our old ways of thinking and search out for new ones. And in our search, we may discover new ways to do philosophy, making it even more of a creative and artistic endeavor. I truly believe that doing philosophy responsibly involves being creative. A responsible philosopher is at the same time an artist whose efforts are aimed at improving his or her craft.

This is my message to the class of 2015: let us remain open-minded and be more creative, let us have confidence in our humility, passion for what we do, and care for one another. These, I think, are the responsibilities we must now take over for ourselves.

From Amy Maniatis, former chief marketing officer for National Geographic, 2015 Alumni Speaker:
For starters, I thought I’d share the story of how philosophy got me my first job. With no idea what I really wanted to do, my husband (who was my boyfriend at the time and a graduate student here) convinced me that a job in advertising would be FUN. Lots of free lunches and good parties.

I had written one of my final papers at school here on the philosophy of language, and integrated the use of metaphor and irony in the marketing campaigns that were running at the time. These will pre-date almost all of you, but campaigns like “Got Milk?” And “Mentos — the fresh maker” were all the rage.

I remember doing dozens of “informational interviews” at local ad agencies in San Francisco—honoring my pitch to future employers that the principles of good marketing were actually at the heart of the study of philosophy! I would quote Grice on the difference between lying and misleading in language and our very own John Searle on intention and meaning in speech acts. This was Mad Men stuff!
Eventually this pitch landed me my first job at an agency in San Francisco, Foote, Cone & Belding, famous for their client Levi’s.

I LOVED helping to market blue jeans. It felt like a really NOBLE pursuit getting guys to wear better jeans, especially since this was the early ’90s and acid wash jeans with white Reeboks were the wardrobe staple.

But the trouble came when I was put on other, less noble accounts, like Coors Beer and Clorox Bleach. I told my boss I was happy to market the blue jeans, but getting women to flush more bleach down the toilet and convincing eighteen-year-olds to slug back more beer violated my personal ethical code. Then I got moved to work on Bagel Bites…

I married Marty, the grad student I met my first year at Berkeley, who had started teaching philosophy…Before long, I became the mother of two amazing girls—Lucy and Chloe, now teenagers. And I learned to surf. I co-wrote a couple of books on new exciting topics in my life like parenting and LOVE. And I started to think about what I REALLY wanted to do.

I missed my days at Moses Hall when I was afforded the ability to think about, discuss, analyze, and be part of the bigger questions. Fifteen years out of school and I was still thinking about what I wanted to be when I grew up. I still am, and so are many of the most impressive and accomplished people I have met—they are curious and not afraid to fail. I think it’s a gift to always be curious, and I’d like to think that our degree in philosophy makes us professionally curious.

It was curiosity that moved me to DC when I got a call that National Geographic was looking for its first head of marketing. In a short period of time I went from peddling khakis and graphic tees to hosting Google hangouts with Jane Goodall and tweeting James Cameron’s progress as he successfully reached the deepest point on earth—the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

I was suddenly working with formidable scientists, world-famous photographers, and Pulitzer prize-winning journalists. And I honestly felt completely terrified and out of my depth.

But the skills I learned at Berkeley in this program gave me my sea legs. I had survived Hannah Ginsborg’s semester on Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason, and immersed myself in Dreyfus’s discussion of Heidegger. I knew how to think, and write and communicate complicated ideas; I could hold my own with these wonderful scientists….

Heidegger was concerned that philosophy should be capable of telling us the meaning of Being, (of the where and what Dasein is). He postulated that, the world is here, now, and everywhere around us and that an AUTHENTIC existence can only take shape when we realize who we are and that we have our own destiny to fulfill.

Now, I was not quite sure I knew what Heidegger meant by an AUTHENTIC existence or even that I agreed with him when I was in your shoes. But I can tell you the long, fascinating journey I have had since, with its many diversions and detours and heartbreak, has led me to a keener sense and enjoyment of being-in-the-world.

And the hugely comforting part is that my gut instinct all those 22 years ago and your gut instinct now, will lead you on that authentic journey.

With that, I encourage you to put any anxiety aside and unleash your inquisitive skills. Remain forever curious, and you will find the contours of your life falling into place before you even realize it.

From Taylor Madigan, 2016 Undergraduate Speaker:

To my fellow graduates: now that we are graduating and heading out into what is often called “the real-world,” we can take solace in the thought that there is a possible world in which our counterparts have ample job opportunities because they decided to major in business rather than get a degree in philosophy.

So why did we choose to study philosophy? We had to make a choice. There are over 100 majors offered at Berkeley, and each of those respective fields studies an interesting set of questions and makes use of a set of tools tailored to tackle them. There are over 100 majors and we chose to study philosophy. Why did we choose this set of questions? This set of tools?

…I can’t speak for everyone, but I would be willing to guess that the reason all of us chose to be sitting here today, graduating from this department, is because some set of philosophical questions keeps us up at night. I know they keep me up at night. And I think they keep us up at night because how we decide to answer them, what we decide to believe, greatly impacts our lives. Our beliefs make a sort of map of what we think the world is like, and the direction each of us thinks we ought to go depends a great deal on what our map looks like. So I can’t help but wonder: what if I’ve got the wrong map? And I’d bet that something like that thought has crossed your mind too, because in order to get here, sitting where you are now, you had to trudge through an endless sea of thought and wander through in an impenetrable fog of esoteric jargon. Why did we do that? Why did we volunteer to lose ourselves in the labyrinths of language and logic?

I think each and every one of us knows that in doing so we had nothing to lose but false beliefs. For, if our beliefs were true, our investigation would reveal that we were right all along, and we would be reassured of our initial convictions. And if our beliefs turned out to be false, well, that is something that we ourselves wanted to know.

Often times, more times than I care to recount, philosophical exploration revealed that my beliefs were misguided. But what philosophy teaches us is that it’s ok to take wrong turns, it’s ok to make mistakes, because you can go wrong in new and interesting ways. No matter how we choose to begin this new chapter in our grand adventure we will continue to make mistakes, but hopefully they will lead us to new and interesting places.

What we learn from studying philosophy is that it is better to have no map at all then a map of the wrong place. Instead, by studying philosophy, we learn to use a compass. And we learn to look to the constellation of people around us, and who have come before us, and we travel to far off but liberating regions of intellectual space. Some of us are going to try and continue that journey, at least for a while longer, and some of us are going to go in new directions all together. But no matter where we go, because of our education in philosophy here at Berkeley, we will never navigate the world in quite the same way again. So let us go out and be cartographers, and choose our tools wisely.
From Raymond Banks, founder of Cal Armed Forces Alumni and Urban Scholars at Berkeley, 2016 Alumni Speaker:
Alain Leroy Locke was an American writer, philosopher, educator. Distinguished as the first African American Rhodes Scholar in 1907, Locke was the philosophical architect—the acknowledged “Dean”—of the Harlem Renaissance.

According to Leonard Harris, author of The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Renaissance and Beyond, Locke’s philosophy of the New Negro was grounded in the concept of race-building and its most important component is overall awareness of the potential black equality. No longer would blacks allow themselves to adjust themselves or comply with unreasonable white requests. This idea was based on self-confidence and political awareness. Although in the past the laws regarding equality had been ignored without consequence, Locke’s philosophical idea of the New Negro allowed for fair treatment. Because this was an idea and not a law, its power was held in the people. If they wanted this idea to flourish, they were the ones who would need to “enforce” it through their actions and overall points of view. In my opinion, his reconstrual of Black identity and his view that it needed to take personal responsibility for its freedom spawned the civil rights movement.

Although my endeavors have been much more modest, philosophy has given me the skills to create organizations and programs based upon the notion of cultural empathy, which acknowledges first-person experiences and focuses on common denominators instead of differences, in order to promote self-empowerment, equity, and inclusion.

One example: I helped co-found Cal Armed Forces Alumni (or CAFA), whose mission is to ensure that its current and future alums reflect the diversity of the military. By engaging and connecting Cal alumni through public service, Cal Armed Forces Alumni has developed a network of recruitment, retention, and mentoring at Cal. In fact, one of our members, who is also a Philosophy major, graduated from Boalt Hall Friday…

I also co-founded Urban Scholars at Berkeley (USB). USB is designed to perpetuate cycles of empowerment and break cycles of poverty, including, but not limited to, for those who have any interaction with the criminal justice system, veterans, and others that have been marginalized by urban institutions, agencies, and legislative bodies…To do so, we develop and employ strategies, such as the Malcolm Next Scholars Program, a cross-enrollment program for formerly incarcerated community college students, first piloted in the spring of 2015. The program allows local community college students to cross-enroll in a class at Berkeley, to see if they might eventually want to apply to transfer to Berkeley…

I believe that philosophy is an ideal major for these and other minority students, for many of the same reasons that it’s an ideal major for any student. Philosophy develops practical meta-skills that are applicable to almost all disciplines and real life situations, such as critical thinking and analytical skills, constructing and deconstructing arguments, composing cogent essays, etc. These critical skills are crucial for just about anything, but especially for effectively advocating for both oneself and others, and for social justice, where the waters are often intentionally muddied. With philosophy’s creative elements one can create educational opportunities for others, and one can bring into existence an idea, movement, notion, or institution…In other words, with philosophy you can do damn near anything you want to do! What are you going to do with your gift of philosophy?

“The Limits of Science” continued from page 5
On the other hand, people sometimes contrast what’s “objective” with “what’s known only through imaginative understanding, by taking up the perspective of another.” On this way of reading it, an “objective” truth is one that you can know otherwise than through the use of imaginative understanding. It’s not a truth about how things are “from some perspective.” Now on this way of reading “objective,” it’s entirely possible that there are truths that aren’t “objective” truths. The truths about someone’s conscious life are still truths even if they can only be known through the use of imaginative understanding, and can’t be accessed by means of science at all.

What’s confusing is that people seem not to separate these two different ways of talking about “what’s objectively there,” so they suppose that all truths must be objective truths, and then become very puzzled by the idea of objective truths that can’t be known on the basis of science, but only by imaginative understanding.

Yet once we’ve got to this point, there’s a big problem that arises. I’ve been saying, in effect, that our ordinary imaginative understanding of one another has a certain authority. We know what’s going on in one another’s heads on the basis of our imaginative understanding of one another, as in the case of Othello’s audience, and perhaps those facts can’t be accessed in any other way, perhaps not by the crazily ambitious 17th-century program that we now call science. But the imaginative, after all, is not the source only of our knowledge of one another’s minds. It’s also the source of our aesthetic and religious responses to the world. Suppose you’re watching a massive thunderstorm and give your imagination free rein to determine what’s happening. A pantheon of angry or playful gods is easy to conjure up. But if we’re going to give imaginative understanding due weight when finding the causes of things in the mental realm, and we’re going to argue that maybe science can’t give another way of accessing those facts about mental causes, why not give the imagination free rein in the interpretation of thunderstorms? Nowadays people would react to thunderstorms by saying, however awe-inspiring the display, well, all this is perfectly comprehensible scientifically. If we can give a scientific account, well that can replace what is provided by the impulses of the imagination. But we don’t take that line in the case of our imaginative understanding of other people. Confronted by a furious partner, for example, we don’t say, well all this is perfectly comprehensible scientifically, in terms of the mathematical characteristics of fundamental particles, and use that to set aside what we know on the basis of our imaginative understanding of them. If we did that, we’d lose our hold on absolutely everything that is of any practical value to us. But the trouble is that we’re making selective use of science to discredit the impulses of the imagination. If we regard the imagination as giving us knowledge of some sector of reality when we’re engaging with other people, why not regard it as giving knowledge of some sector of reality when we’re engaging with thunderstorms? Because that’s different? In what way is it different? We are still at the beginning in analyzing the relation between our imaginative understanding of the world and scientific explanation.
Davis, and Rome. In 2015-16 he was a visiting fellow first at UCL and has given talks at UCL, Oxford, Munich, Berlin, UT Austin, NYU, UC and other places. He continues to work on his project on Aristotle's theory of animal and human agency. He also has a paper forthcoming in a collection of essays on Aristotle’s work on the causes of the motion of animals, De Motu Animalium (with a new Greek text edited by Oliver Primavesi at LMU Munich). Both will appear soon with the Meiner-Verlag in Hamburg. He also authored an extended discussion of Anna Marmo’s Aristotle on Perceiving Objects (OSAP L 2016, 289-320). He was a visiting speaker at various events in Pittsburgh, Victoria, Chicago, Gothenburg, Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Zurich, Frankfurt, Princeton, Lille, Northwestern University, Utah, UC Davis, University of Patras, and other places. He continues to work on his project on Aristotle’s theory of animal and human agency.

Klaus Corcilius corcilius@berkeley.edu
Klaus Corcilius, besides continuing to work on his book project on Aristotle’s theory of animal and human agency, now has finished two of his long-term book projects in the German language: a translation of Aristotle's De Anima and a translation of, and philosophical commentary on, Aristotle’s work on the causes of the motion of animals, De Motu Animalium (with a new Greek text edited by Oliver Primavesi from LMU Munich). Both will appear soon with the Meiner-Verlag in Hamburg. He also authored an extended discussion of Anna Marmo’s Aristotle on Perceiving Objects (OSAP L 2016, 289-320). He was a visiting speaker at various events in Pittsburgh, Victoria, Chicago, Gothenburg, Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Zurich, Frankfurt, Princeton, Lille, Northwestern University, Utah, UC Davis, University of Patras, and other places. He continues to work on his project on Aristotle’s theory of animal and human agency.

Tim Clarke tclarke@berkeley.edu
Tim Clarke’s paper “Aristotle and the Ancient Puzzle about Coming to Be” was published in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 49 (Winter 2015). He also has a paper forthcoming in a collection of essays on Aristotle’s Physics (Cambridge University Press). In the last two years he has given talks at UCL, Oxford, Munich, Berlin, UT Austin, NYU, UC Davis, and Rome. In 2015-16 he was a visiting fellow first at UCL and then at the Humboldt University in Berlin. This summer he will be participating in two workshops on Aristotle’s natural philosophy, one on On Generation and Corruption, in Spetses, the other on De Incessu Animalium at the University of Patras.

Hubert Dreyfus dreyfus@berkeley.edu
Hubert Dreyfus is currently working on developing his course on Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky into a new volume with Sean Kelly, much like their previous collaboration on All Things Shining did for Homer and Moby Dick. Toward that end, he delivered a talk at Oxford last summer on Dostoevsky, showing how The Brothers Karamazov is a successful attempt to save the sacred from science. His most recent publication is a collaboration with Charles Taylor from Harvard Press, Retrieving Realism.

Hannah Ginsborg ginsborg@berkeley.edu
Hannah Ginsborg spent Fall 2014 as a visiting research professor in Munich and Spring 2015 on sabbatical in Berlin, returning to Berkeley for academic year 2015-2016. Over the two-year period she has worked on Kant (aesthetics and philosophy of science), on the philosophy of music, on the role of experience in rationalizing belief, and on rule-following and the normativity of meaning. Her work has resulted in several forthcoming articles, including “Normativity and Concepts,” “Why Must We Presuppose the Systematicity of Nature?”, “Kant’s Young Poet: “Minimal Empiricism and Normative Constraint,” and “Two Concepts of Absolute Music.” She has given talks in philosophy colloquium series in Salzburg, Vienna, Dresden, Atlanta, Seattle, and Pittsburgh; at the Center for Advanced Studies in Munich; and at conferences and workshops in Bonn, Vancouver, Atlanta, London, Berkeley, San Francisco, and her home town of Edinburgh. She recently gave the 2016 Jacobsen Lecture at the University of London. She will be Department Chair starting in Fall 2016.
Wes Holliday wesholliday@berkeley.edu
Since the last newsletter, Wes Holliday's work has been published or accepted for publication in a number of journals and books, including: Oxford Studies in Epistemology; Theory and Decision; Thought: A Journal of Philosophy; Being, Freedom, and Method; Themes from van Inwagen (Oxford University Press); Handbook of Formal Philosophy (Springer); Outstanding Contributions to Logic: Jaakko Hintikka (Springer); Studia Logica; and Journal of Logic and Computation. Since then he has also given talks at the University of Groningen, the University of Amsterdam, UT Austin, Stanford University, and New Mexico State University. He has served on the program committees of several international conferences, including Amsterdam Colloquium 2015, KR 2016, LOFT 12, and WoLLIC 2016, and he was the Program Committee Co-Chair of the 5th International Conference on Logic, Rationality, and Interaction held in Taipei, Taiwan in October 2015. In December 2015, he became the 5th International Conference on Logic, Rationality, and Interaction conferences, including Amsterdam Colloquium 2015, KR 2016, LOFT 12, and WoLLIC 2016, and he was the Program Committee Co-Chair of the 5th International Conference on Logic, Rationality, and Interaction held in Taipei, Taiwan in October 2015. In December 2015, he became an editorial board member of the book series Trends in Logic, and he is currently serving in his third year as an editor of The Review of Symbolic Logic.

Niko Kolodny kolodny@berkeley.edu
Since the last edition of this newsletter, Niko Kolodny spoke at Oxford, LSE, Stanford, Penn, MIT, Tulane, Texas, Virginia, Pittsburgh, Vancouver, Princeton, Mexico City (CID), Arizona, Missouri, and Toronto. He has published three papers in political philosophy and is working on three more, all of which he hopes to combine into a book.

Geoffrey Lee geoffrey.lee@berkeley.edu
Geoff Lee has been working on a book about the prospects of a theory of consciousness, as well as articles on topics in philosophy of perception and consciousness. His recently published and forthcoming articles include: “Extensionalism, Atomism and Continuity,” “Experiences and their Parts,” “Does Experience have Phenomenal Properties?,” and “Making Sense of Subjective Time.”

John MacFarlane jgm@berkeley.edu
John MacFarlane began working out a new account of vagueness, inspired by ideas from meta-ethical expressivism, which he presented in talks at Chicago, Davis, and Berkeley. He published papers on Abelard’s conception of logic and Huw Price’s neopragmatism. He participated in symposia on his 2014 book, Assessment Sensitivity, at the Central Division APA in Chicago and in the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, and he gave seminars on the book at the University of Bonn, NYU, Rutgers, and the University of Chicago. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2015. After three years as Department Chair, he looks forward to spending next academic year at the Institut d’Études avancées in Paris.

Paolo Mancosu mancosu@socrates.berkeley.edu
Since returning from his sabbatical in Munich in summer 2014, Paolo has been valiantly trying to juggle teaching, administration, and research. In fall 2014 and fall 2015 he taught graduate seminars on Wittgenstein’s Tractatus and proof theory. He is now chairing (for the third time) the Group in Logic and the Methodology of Science, in addition to being a member of the Committee on Research at UC Berkeley and of the advisory board of the Townsend Center. On the research front he published a book of essays in French (Infini, logique, géométrie, Vrin, Paris, 2015) and a booklet (Smugglers, Rebels, Pirates, Hoover Press, Stanford, 2015), which is now being published in Russian and Chinese. He also published several articles in, among other venues, Philosophia Mathematica, The Review of Symbolic Logic, and History and Philosophy of Logic. Two new books of his will appear in October 2016: Abstraction and Infinity (Oxford University Press) and Zhivago’s Secret Journey (Hoover Press). During this period, he lectured extensively in Poland, England, Spain, France, and the U.S. and delivered the keynote address for the largest Pasternak conference ever (Stanford, September 28–October 2, 2015).

Alva Noë noe@berkeley.edu
Alva Noë was on sabbatical during 2015–2016. During this time his research has continued to focus on art and experience. This was the subject of his book Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature, which was published in September 2015. Alva has recently been awarded the second annual Judd-Hume Prize in Advanced Visual Studies. He continues to write weekly for National Public Radio’s 13.7 Cosmos and Culture series.

Hans Sluga sluga@berkeley.edu
Hans Sluga visited Hong Kong in July 2015 to attend an international conference on Chinese philosophy where he delivered a talk on the idea of friendship in Western and Chinese thought. In December he gave three talks in Japan visiting Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kamakura. His Wittgenstein book has now been translated into Italian, Chinese, and Arabic.

Barry Stroud barrys@berkeley.edu
In the last two years Stroud has written published or soon-to-be-published essays on the objectivity of morality, on perceptual knowledge, on an “externalist” theory of knowledge, on Kant’s transcendental deduction, on the source of logical necessity, and on meaning, use, and understanding in the philosophies of Davidson and Wittgenstein. He has written a Preface to the re-issue of Gilbert Ryle’s Dilemmas, and reviews of new books on Hume and on the philosophy of action and knowledge. He has given talks and seminars on these and other subjects in several countries in the past two years, including responding to a dozen or so South American philosophers commenting on his work in a two-day conference on his contributions to philosophy as part of the annual national meeting of philosophers in Brazil.

R. Jay Wallace rjw@berkeley.edu
Jay Wallace’s book The View from Here: On Affirmation, Attachment, and the Limits of Regret (Oxford: 2013) has continued to attract attention in the past two years. It was featured at a Workshop at Aarhus University in Denmark in November 2014, and Wallace participated in a session of the radio show Philosophy Talk on themes from the book in the summer of 2015. A symposium on the book recently appeared in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, and another is in preparation for the Journal of Applied Philosophy. Meanwhile, Wallace has begun presenting material from his next book project, The Moral Nexus, delivering three Hempel Lectures at Princeton University on this topic in May, 2015. He also delivered the Justus Hartnack Lecture at Aarhus University in Denmark in November, 2014, on “Value, Trauma, and the Future of Humanity,” as well as talks at Harvard University, the University of Toronto, and Duke University. At Berkeley, Wallace has continued his service on the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations, serving as Chair of the committee in 2015–16. He has been awarded an Einstein Visiting Fellowship for 2016–18 to support collaborations with philosophers in Berlin on topics relating to his current research.

Seth Yalcin yalcin@berkeley.edu
Seth Yalcin’s last few talks were at Princeton, NYU, Oxford, Michigan, MIT, UNAM, ZAS Berlin, and the University of Amsterdam. In the
spring of 2016 he organized the second Meaning Sciences Workshop, which brought dozens of philosophers and linguists to Berkeley. Also in 2016, he co-organized the third annual Philosophy Mountain Workshop in Big Sky, Montana. His last few papers came out in Noûs, Philosophical Review, Analysis, Ergo, and Linguistics and Philosophy. His paper “Figure and Ground in Logical Space” is forthcoming in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. He recently succeeded in resisting the temptation to write a paper on the later Wittgenstein.

New Faculty Publications

John Campbell
_Berkeley's Puzzle_, Oxford University Press, 2014
How does our sensory experience enable us to conceive of things as mind-independent? This book is a debate between two rival approaches to understanding the relationship between concepts and sensory experience. [Adapted from Oxford University Press]

Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor
_Retrieving Realism_, Harvard University Press, 2015
For Descartes, knowledge exists as ideas in the mind that represent the world. In a radical critique, Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor argue that knowledge consists of much more than representations in our minds. They affirm our direct contact with reality—both physical and social—and our shared understanding of it. [Adapted from Harvard University Press]

Hannah Ginsborg
The fourteen essays collected here advance a common interpretive project: that of bringing out the philosophical significance of the notion of judgment which figures in the third Critique and showing its importance both to Kant’s own theoretical philosophy and to contemporary views of human thought and cognition. [Adapted from Oxford University Press]

Alva Noé
_Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature_, Hill & Wang, 2015
In this book, Noé raises a number of profound questions: What is art? Why do we value art as we do? What does art reveal about our nature? Drawing on philosophy, art history, and cognitive science, Noé offers new answers to such questions. He also shows why recent efforts to frame questions about art in terms of neuroscience and evolutionary biology alone are unsuccessful. [Adapted from Hill & Wang]

John Searle
_Seeking Things as They Are_, Oxford University Press, 2015
This book provides a comprehensive account of the intentionality of perceptual experience. With special emphasis on vision Searle explains how the raw phenomenology of perception sets the content and the conditions of satisfaction of experience. The central question concerns the relation between the subjective conscious perceptual field and the objective perceptual field. [Adapted from Oxford University Press]

Department Events

We are very fortunate to have several endowed lectureships in philosophical subjects in the Department and the Graduate Division, which annually bring some of the most distinguished and interesting philosophers to speak at Berkeley. Please join us, if you can, at the following upcoming events.

Townsend Visitors
Rachel Barney (University of Toronto)
Jennifer Hornsby (Birkbeck, University of London)

George Myro Memorial Lectures
Anil Gupta (University of Pittsburgh)
Tim Crane (University of Cambridge)
Sally Haslanger (MIT)

Howison Lectures in Philosophy
Christine Korsgaard (Harvard)
Kwame Anthony Appiah (NYU)

Tanner Lectures on Human Values
Ernest Sosa (Rutgers University)
Daniel Dennett (Tufts University)

For more information, and a complete listing of Departmental colloquia and events, please visit the Department’s website:
[http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/events/upcoming](http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/events/upcoming)