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Philosophy

@X

WHAT'S NEW IN THE DEPARTMENT

We are back in the Tower! 2018-19 was an interesting and busy year in Philosophy @ StFX. The move into and out of Coady-MacNeil and, then, in and out of Lane Hall, a variety of public lectures and debates, hosting the Atlantic Region Philosophers Association meeting, book launches and research days – it's hard to believe that so much happened in just a year! 2019-20 promises to be an equally interesting year, as well.

Dr. Michael Szlachta, is joining the Department of Philosophy this fall. He comes from the University of Toronto, where he completed his PhD in 2019. (*Read more about Dr. Szlachta on page 3.*)

In the 2019-20 academic year, the Department will be offering two new honours seminars: In PHIL 461, '**Aquinas on Nature and Metaphysics**,' Dr Steve Baldner will focus on key texts of Thomas Aquinas concerning the principles of natural beings (e.g., form and matter), metaphysical principles (e.g., being, essence, and God), and epistemology. And in PHIL 462, '**Knowledge and Being**' (offered in the second term), Dr Doug Al-Maini will look at Plato's imagery and metaphors in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, in order to arrive at insights into imitation and identity.

In the past year, several books have been published by professors in the Department, and Department members continue to be invited to give lectures across Canada and around the world. And, in the coming year, books by Profs Al-Maini, Groarke, and Sweet are slated to appear.

Finally (?), we have four honours thesis students this year: Shaughnessy Cudmore-Keating, Tane Caubo, Mercedes Tibollo, and Caleb Scargill. The StFX Philosophy Club will be active as well. If you are interested in joining or attending some of the events, don't hesitate to contact one or both of the Co-Presidents, Shaughnessy Cudmore-Keating and Mercedes Tibollo.

The breadth and range of study and research – by students and by faculty – in Philosophy at StFX is remarkable. The quality of teaching and research has been long recognised. Dr. Baldner and Dr Groarke have received the University's Distinguished Teaching Award, and Dr. William Sweet its President's Research Award, Outreach Award, and University Research Award. Inside this Newsletter, you'll see further examples of why students from all disciplines are attracted to taking Philosophy @ X.

PHILOSOPHY AWARD WINNERS AND MEDALISTS 2019



Jamie Samson



Natasha Gushue

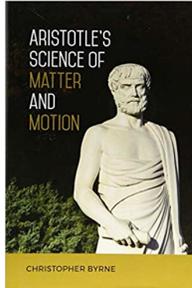
Jamie Samson is the 2019 recipient of the Fr Charles R. MacDonald Memorial Medal in Philosophy. Jamie's thesis was on "The Ethics of Organ Donation in Canada"; she presented a version of her thesis at the Atlantic Region Philosophers Association meeting in October 2018. Jamie is currently attending Dalhousie University Law School.

Natasha Gushue is the recipient of the Dr. Paul V. Groarke Book Prize in Philosophy. The title of her thesis was "Death, What Is It Good For? Why Our Mortality Is What Makes Us Human." Natasha is currently a student in the BEd program at StFX.



Professor Christopher Byrne entered into retirement, effective June 30, 2019, after 34 years at StFX. His book, *Aristotle's Science of Matter and Motion*, appeared in August of 2018, and his final year of teaching at StFX allowed him several opportunities to present some of his ongoing research on Aristotle, metaphysics, and the philosophy of

science. A symposium on his book was held at the Canadian Philosophical Association conference, in Vancouver. He is now living in Ottawa where, he reports, he is working on several small projects along with participating in a research group at the Dominican University College.



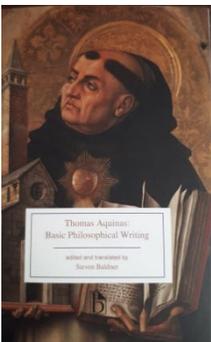
Throughout his career at StFX, Dr Byrne exemplified what it is to be an academic. His teaching was outstanding, his service to the university was exemplary, and he was conscientious and meticulous in his research. His wry and dry sense of humour, as well as his passion for philosophy, and his ability to inspire a similar passion for philosophy in many of his students, will greatly be missed.

▣



Professor Steven Baldner writes:

Last November, my translation of Aquinas - *Thomas Aquinas: Basic Philosophical Writing* - was published. This has been a labour of love over many years – it took me much longer to translate these texts than it took Aquinas to write them! Also, last November, I delivered a paper at the American Catholic Philosophical Association annual meeting, “Thomas Aquinas and Natural Inclination in Non-Living Nature” which will be published in 2019. I argue that Thomas had a much broader recognition of final causality in nature than what our current cosmology seems to allow. This past June, I made one last attempt to refute our former (alas!) colleague, Christopher Byrne in a paper called “Thomistic and Aristotelian Hylomorphism,” given at a book panel on Byrne’s *Aristotle’s Science of Matter and Motion* at the Canadian Philosophical Association annual meeting. Over the summer I have worked on the problem of creation and



causality in Aquinas and in early modern philosophy, and I directed two honours theses.

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Professor Doug Al-Maini writes:

During the past year I worked on and completed my share of editing the fourth edition of the Broadview Philosophy textbook, *Ethical Issues: Perspectives for Canadians*. It should be coming out some time in the spring of 2020. I also wrote a couple of book reviews – one of

Lewis Fallis’ *Socrates and Divine Revelation*, and one of Brian Harding’s *Not Even a God Can Save Us Now*. Last winter, I presented a paper at the annual ARPA conference, ‘Doing Philosophy in the Cities of the Republic,’ and this past summer – for a change – I went to Vermont for two weeks to take a Permaculture Design Course with Ben Falk, an icon within the Permaculture movement. It was very stimulating, and I gathered some ideas to use in my next Environmental Ethics class. Finally, my ‘magnificent obsession’ at home is erecting more and more fencing for my goats. Goats can really escape anything!



Professor Louis Groarke spent

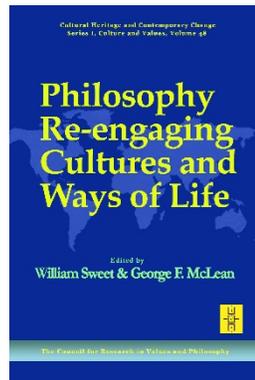
the summer of 2019 in Vancouver, in Quebec, in Ireland, and in England. This past summer he helped organize and presided at a special session at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings in Vancouver on Dr Byrne’s recent book *Aristotle’s Science of Matter and Motion*. He

also gave a presentation on Aristotle and prayer at the annual Canadian Maritain Society meetings. (Yes, he thinks that Aristotle, as a pagan, not a Christian, did pray.). He has on-going projects on the ethics of self-driving vehicles and on the aesthetics of John Ruskin. His textbook, *Living Wisely* (co-edited with Paolo Biondi and his brother Paul Groarke), is going into the final stages of editing and proofing this fall. He is also working on a book project on reasoning, epistemology, and metaphysics from an Aristotelian perspective. He can usually be found in his office into the wee hours of the morning – or at the gym, where he consciously seeks to exemplify the dictum, *Mens sana in corpore sano* [A healthy mind in a healthy body].



Professor William Sweet has been actively involved in teaching and research, both at home and abroad, over the past year. In July 2019, he was appointed Jules Léger Research Chair in the Humanities and Social Sciences for the period 2019-21. He also continues to serve as Chair of the Ethics Committee of the Eastern Zone of the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

He writes: Last December I was, again, in China (having been there just a few months prior, in August, for the World Congress of Philosophy). This time, I gave a short course at the Renmin University of China in Beijing, and lectures in Changzhou and Suzhou. Last fall I also gave papers at the University of Notre Dame (Indiana), the Canadian Maritain Association, and the North American Victorian Studies Association. This past May (2019), I attended meetings of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, the Biomedical Ethics Network of the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association, and the Canadian Philosophical Association, as well as the Canadian Theological Society (at which I was elected President for 2019-20).



My book, *Philosophy Re-engaging Cultures and Ways of Life* appeared last fall, as well as articles on Jacques Maritain, Henry Manning, Charles Malik, and John Henry Newman. This fall I expect to be in Michigan (for a 'festschrift conference' on the work of Sr Prudence Allen), in Washington, DC (where I am part of a small group with Charles Taylor, Terry Pinkard, José Casanova, and Michael Walzer, responding to a draft of a forthcoming book by Taylor), in Montreal and in Ottawa (where I am presenting papers on Jacques Maritain). I am revising proofs for a book on *Religion and Democracy*, finishing a volume on *Catholic Social Thought* (with Gregory Melchin), and revising a translation of Jacques Maritain's *Lectures on Natural Law* (under contract to University of Notre Dame Press).

INTRODUCING DR. MICHAEL SZLACHTA



Dr Michael Szlachta is joining the Department for the 2019-20 academic year. He is a graduate of the University of Toronto, where he wrote his PhD thesis on will, intellect, and control in 13th century philosophy, but he also has a strong interest in ethics, early modern philosophy, and action theory. Dr. Szlachta will be teaching Introductory Philosophy (100), Critical Thinking (251), Logic (342), Mediaeval Philosophy (362) and Philosophy of Human Nature (232) this year.

He writes: Early this summer, I continued my work on Peter John Olivi's theory of the will and prepared a paper about choice and motivation for the proceedings of a conference I presented at last year. I also worked on two presentations, one for a conference in Prague on contingency and necessity and another for the International Medieval Congress in Leeds. Since arriving at StFX in August, I've been working on revising preparing another article on Godfrey of Fontaines and moral imputability. This fall, I'm looking forward to the appearance of an article on Thomas of Sutton and the self-motion of the will and my first courses at StFX and continuing my research on medieval moral psychology.



The Canadian Philosophical Association, at its Annual Congress in June in Vancouver, sponsored a book symposium on Dr Byrne's recent book. Here we see Dr Groarke explaining how big prime matter is, to the enraptured interest of three of the panelists



ARPA AT STFX



Professor Eleonore Stump spends some time with Department members. (left to right), Professors Steve Baldner, Eleonore Stump, Louis Groarke, Doug Al-Maini, William Sweet, and Christopher Byrne.

On October 19 and 20 of last year, the StFX Philosophy Department hosted the 2018 meeting of the Atlantic Region Philosophers Association. Established in 1970, the Association's aim is to foster research and scholarship within the philosophical community in Atlantic Canada. StFX has hosted the conference in 1998 and 2008, but the 2018 conference attracted more participants than ever before. Among the topics discussed at the meeting were respect for rights and the ethics of organ donation, indigenization and the curriculum, and questions in the history of philosophy and Canadian philosophy.

The keynote speaker for the Conference was Dr. Eleonore Stump, the Robert J. Henle S.J. Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University, who spoke on "Guilt and Forgiveness," addressing the question of whether there are some things for which a person can never, and should never, be forgiven.

When Dr. Stump was in Antigonish, she met with StFX students from the Humanities Colloquium and senior students in the Faculty of Arts

StFX was well represented at the conference. Among the presenters were Jamie Samson (BA 2019), an honours philosophy student and a recipient of a StFX Irving Internship, and six StFX philosophy alumni: Mary-Jo Curry (BA 2008), Paul Curry (BA 2005), Dylan Mackenzie (BA 2008) from Saint Mary's, Robbie Moser (BA 2001) from Mount Alison, Edward Taylor (BA 2012) from Concordia, and Peter Haskett (BA 2014) from Carleton University and the Catholic University of America.



Some of our senior students (and alumni) during the ARPA meeting.



(Left to right: Billy Kehoe, Jamie Samson, Dr. Eleonore Stump, Shaughnessy Cudmore-Keating, Leah Gray, and Caleb Scargill)

PHILOSOPHY GRADS 2019



Some of our philosophy grads made it for an official photo, following spring convocation. Students present were (left to right) Hanna Bergman, Natasha Gushue, Jamie Samson, Tony Prillo, Christian Northup-Wile, (Missing: Will Grant, Liam Palmer)



In December 2018, eminent philosophy professor, **Dr Thomas De Koninck** of Laval University, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from St FX. Here is Dr De Koninck (centre left) with members of the Department.

Ethics in China

In December 2018, Dr. William Sweet served as a Visiting Professor in the School of Philosophy at Renmin University in China. Prof. Sweet was invited under Renmin University's International Frontier Faculty Training Program, whereby an outstanding overseas scholar is invited to the university to give a course of lectures, aimed at providing Chinese academics with the latest academic research on issues of contemporary concern. Dr. Sweet gave a series of lectures on normative ethical theory and the place of intercultural philosophy.



His Visiting Professorship followed on an earlier trip to China, in August 2018, where he lectured at Shandong University, in Jinan, at the Beijing Institute of Buddhism Culture, and at the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing.

Renmin University is one of China's leading universities, devoted primarily to the humanities and social sciences. Its School of Philosophy has some 80 faculty members, including over a dozen in the area of ethics alone.

During his time in China, Prof. Sweet also met with scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with graduate and post-doctoral students from philosophy, politics, and law, at Renmin, and, later, with faculty from Changzhou University and from the School of Business Administration of the Suzhou University of Science and Technology. Dr. Sweet was impressed by the students who, he said, were among the best that he has met.



Visiting lecturer, Dr Jason Bell, together with Philosophy students and faculty



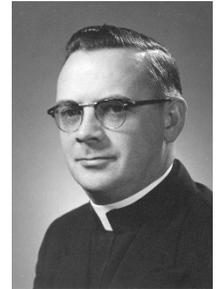
Philosophy Awards and Prizes

The Father Edo Gatto Award and The Father Charles R. MacDonald Medal

The Department makes two awards annually to students of high academic ability.



Edo Gatto (1931-91)
[photo courtesy W. Sweet]



C. R. MacDonald (1920-75)
[photo courtesy StFX]

The Father Charles R. MacDonald Memorial Medal is the Department's highest award to a graduating student, and is normally awarded at convocation. It honours Fr. MacDonald, who taught at StFX (1946-74).

Born in Glace Bay on 22 Dec. 1920, Fr. MacDonald studied at StFX (BA 1941), Holy Heart Seminary (Halifax), and the Université Laval (Québec) (PhD, 1965). In the 1950s, he established a 'great books' club at StFX "to encourage its members to read many of the classics which everyone wishes to read... but never does." He was recognized as a "brilliant student" both at StFX and at Laval, and was known for his devotion to Plato and Aristotle, "his easy grace of expression, his humble and engaging manner... [and] his ability to say much in little."

The Father Edo Gatto Memorial Award is presented to a student who shows excellence in mediaeval philosophy – particularly in Department's courses in that area. It was established in honour of Fr. Gatto (BA 1952), who died tragically in a motor vehicle accident in Dec. 1991.

Born in Dominion, Cape Breton in 1931, Fr. Gatto graduated from StFX (BA 1952) and studied for the priesthood at St. Basil's Seminary (Toronto). Following ordination in 1956, he received a Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies (from the Pontifical Institute) and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Toronto (1962).

Fr. Gatto taught in the Philosophy Department from 1962 to 1991. He also served on various university committees, including the Senate, Board of Governors, and the X-Ring Committee. He held a number of positions in the Alumni Association including that of President (1980-83). As part of Homecoming 1993, a "Philosopher's Bench" was dedicated in his memory. The Gatto Chair of Christian Studies was established at the University in his honour.

COURSES FOR 2019-2020

PHIL 100 – Introductory Philosophy

... studies the major thinkers in the history of philosophy, and introduces students to logic and critical thinking.

PHIL 135 – Healthcare Ethics

... introduces students to theories, values, and ethical reasoning about problems in health care (for BScN students only).

PHIL 201 – Ancient and Mediaeval Political Philosophy, and

PHIL 201 – Modern Political Philosophy

... examine philosophical issues in politics and society based on the writings of major thinkers from Plato to the present day.

PHIL 213 – Philosophy of Science

... examines scientific method and the logic of science.

PHIL 232 – Freedom and Responsibility

... examines one aspect of human nature – the ability to exercise free and responsible agency – as well as such topics as practical rationality and personhood.

PHIL 245 – Philosophy of Religion

... looks at different concepts of, and proofs for and against, the existence of God, the soul, and the relation of science and religion.

PHIL 251 – Critical Thinking

... equips students to recognise and analyse arguments as they occur in a variety of contexts.

PHIL 281 – Aesthetics

... examines classical and contemporary theories of art and beauty, drawing on examples from literature, visual arts, music, poetry and theatre

PHIL 331 - Ethical Theories, and

PHIL 332 - Contemporary Moral and Social Issues

... deal with the major ethical theories and their applications to contemporary problems.

PHIL 335 – Ethics in Health and Medicine

... provides a survey of major ethical theories and an analysis of values in the context of contemporary issues in medicine and health.

PHIL 342 – Logic

...introduces students to symbolic notation, predicate logic, soundness, and completeness, with an advanced discussion of the rules of reasoning and argument.

PHIL 361 – Early Mediaeval Philosophy, and

PHIL 362 – Philosophy in the High Middle Ages

... discuss problems such as faith and reason, providence and free will, immortality of the soul, and universals, as discussed from Augustine to William of Ockham.

PHIL 372 – Philosophy of Law

... examines issues involved in philosophical reflection on the law and legal institutions

PHIL 381 – Phenomenology and Existentialism

... examines the central questions of 20th century philosophy in the 'continental' tradition.

PHIL 461 Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology I, and

PHIL 462 Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology II

... discuss questions bearing on the ultimate structure of reality as a whole: the nature of material things; the existence of the immaterial; the meaning of being; what can and cannot be known of reality; whether there is a First Cause. [For this year's topics, see p. 1 or consult the Department]

The Departments of
Philosophy
and Political Science
offer a concentration in ethics,
politics, and law to students doing a
joint degree in these two
departments. This concentration will
be of particular interest to students
interested in a pre-law programme.
Interested students should consult
the chairs of the two departments for
advice on course selection.

**Ethics,
Politics,
and Law**

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