

Philosophy Newsletter



May 2017



Philosophy Major and Business Minor - **What Are You Going to Do with That Degree?**

Charles Dillahunt '17

As my senior year winds down, I cannot help but think about how my time spent as a Wabash College philosophy major has positively changed my life. Wabash's philosophy major changed my life for the better because it gave me an arena to mature and decide how I should live my life and treat others through deep thought and deliberation. It also provided a safe space where my not so popular ideas could be articulated, written, questioned, refuted, changed or accepted by others in my classes.

Philosophy also helped me in the business realm. When I would talk to employers, they would ask how has philosophy changed your life, and why do you believe that degree should get you a job in business of all fields? What are you going to do with that degree? To answer these questions, I would say that I believe philosophy trained me to be in the business world way more than my business classes did. This is because the main thing philosophy did for me was teach me how to build successful relationships, and look at a myriad of different arguments, methods, movies, books, or simple statements, break them down sentence by sentence, word by word, and decipher what the author meant to portray in their piece. It also taught me to constantly question, is this right or wrong? Should I follow this practice if I want to be successful? Is it good and just only for myself or for others as well? These are all important questions that not only

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philosophy majors must ask: all people in all forms of business must also ask about their professional decisions. It taught me to think critically, mature efficiently, treat others equally, and act responsibly, in all walks of life, not just in hypotheticals as is the stereotype of most philosophers. I've spent a great deal of time pondering about real world problems, and how to treat people facing these problems in my life. Great business men and women can all think critically and analyze things in great detail, and I believe as a result of my philosophy major I am now able to do the same thing.

Philosophy tries to teach us about core, fundamental principles in our lives, and how to decide which are right or wrong. Since I've spent ample time pondering these questions, it'll be an easier transition when I get into the business realm. Already having accepted a full time job and reflecting on internships, my relationship building and gaining respect of others was never very hard. I believe this is true because of the lessons I learned in philosophy and applied to my real life, that taught me how to treat others respectfully and equally, to avoid conflict, fight for what is right, do the right thing, and live humanely or within my means amongst others. Half of business is relationship building, and my philosophy major definitely showed me ways in which I could do this the right way in my opinion. As a result of these life lessons learned, and a love of philosophical study, my transition to the business world could not have been smoother. Philosophy will always have a special place in my mind for this very reason.

What Philosophy Has Done for Me

Buddy Lobermann '17

When I was a sophomore in high school, I had my first experience with a joke made at the expense of people with philosophy degrees. It went something to the tune of "Major in philosophy, ask people why they want fries with their burger." I'm not one to deny excellent wit when I see it, but I do think jokes like those underline a sense that philosophy degrees are genuinely worthless, because they don't intuitively lead to amassing a fortune after graduation. Even at liberal arts institutions like Wabash, I've come across a great many students who are interested in philosophy, but don't feel like many options exist if they leave this place with a philosophy degree.

I think many people who are skeptical of philosophy degrees do not realize that unlike most other majors, studying philosophy does not narrowly coach students to be well versed in one particular area. Philosophy, in my experience, is less of a noun and more of a verb. The proper study of philosophy is often couched in the writings of thinkers that, to the average student, seem disconnected from their everyday lives. I too often struggle to connect the ideas of men who lived thousands of years ago to the issues of the day. However, the skills I have gained in being trained to approach those ideas

and evaluate them has enabled me to be a more effective member of society, as well as a more critical and more humane one.

Studying philosophy is not about becoming an expert in really old books. It's about being able to tell ideas that matter apart from ones that don't. It's about trying to pick those ideas apart, put them back together, and see if they still work. When those ideas inevitably fail to pass muster, a philosophy degree will have you better prepared to submit your own solutions to whatever problem you see before you. This will be true of every topic a student commits themselves to, all the way from determining the nature of reality, to what it means to be a good Wabash student. Whatever a student wants to do, studying philosophy will help them be better at it. As a result, students who commit themselves to philosophy, whether they do so purely or as a supplement to some other field of study, will find themselves exposed to a wide world of opportunities, both in terms of employment and personal fulfillment.

GLCA Ancient Philosophy Workshop

Earlham College

December 1, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Marina McCoy, Boston College
Other featured speakers: Wabash philosophy rising seniors participating in the senior seminar on Plato and Baldwin



Students Present at Ball State Ancient Philosophy Conference

On Friday, November 4, students in Professor Gower's Ancient Philosophy class traveled to Ball State University to participate in an undergraduate conference concentrating on ancient philosophy. The conference brought together students taking ancient philosophy courses at Ball State, Earlham College, IPFW and Wabash College, creating a forum in which students from different campuses could engage in philosophical dialogue and compare their experiences with ancient philosophy. Three students from Wabash – Tyler Cole, Jade Doty, and William Kelly – presented papers at the conference, and three students – Benjamin Kiesel, Logan Taylor, and Aaron Webb – participated in the conference by offering critical commentaries in response to papers presented by students from other schools. Jade Doty '18 reflects on his experience at the conference.

Jade Doty '18

My overall opinion about the conference is that it was very beneficial to my education. This was my first college experience with any type of formal presentation, so I saw the conference as an opportunity to gain experience with formal presentations. When I was notified of being chosen to present I was at first

pretty nervous and reluctant, not knowing if I would be comfortable sharing a paper of mine in a field that is quite new to me. But after seeing some of the first presentations and getting a beat on how the discussions would work, I did not feel any sense of pressure when it came time for me to present.

After listening to the commentator's response to my paper and discussing it with students from various institutions, I gained a greater understanding for how I should approach philosophy papers, specifically those that incorporate several different texts. By having a student with a different philosophy background than my own look over my paper, I learned that I should be more clear and cautious with my statements in philosophy papers.

What I enjoyed most about the conference was how all the students were genuinely interested in almost every discussion. Everyone there seemed like they held this conference to be a great opportunity to better their understanding of philosophy. I considered the whole conference to be a great experience that I can use to prepare myself for similar situations in the future, for I am certain that I will have to present in front of unknown people again at some point in my career.

Although the conference was a positive experience, there were some problems that arose during our discussions. Sometimes I would make a point when talking about a student's paper, but then a student would disagree with my statement by using a text that I was unfamiliar with. I wouldn't necessarily call this a complaint of mine, but rather an unfortunate circumstance I found myself in while participating in the discussions. The only way I see to combat this is to let the students going know what texts other papers will be considering; I do not know if this is possible though; it's just a suggestion of mine.

Again, overall I thought the experience was beneficial to my education. I now know what to expect at conferences that have scheduled presentations and how to react to them. I am extremely grateful for the entire experience and I hope that future students can have the same opportunity.

The Best Job in the World: Student-Faculty Research on Video Games and Philosophy

Logan Taylor '18

This past summer, I was given the opportunity to participate in a research project with Dr. Carlson, the topic of which was something we're both interested in: video games. We spent a month over the summer working intensely on this project; we read multiple articles and book chapters every day, put together write-ups at the end of every week, played many video games (in an academic capacity, of course), and I personally put together an annotated bibliography of everything we read. The purpose of this project was twofold: work on a paper that we could eventually get published, and plan the Video games and Philosophy course that Dr. Carlson would be teaching in the fall. That month was some of the most fun and intense academic work I've ever done, but even when that month ended, the work was just beginning.

The next step was to present our paper. Although we finished a rough draft at the end of our time during the summer, we spent a few weeks at the beginning of this year editing it to be conference-ready. We submitted our paper to the Indiana Philosophical Association's annual conference and were accepted, speeding off to Depauw to present only a few weeks later. It was an incredible experience, getting to see what work other philosophers were doing in the area and getting to present our work and get feedback on it, then attending dinner with the other conference-goers and discussing all manner of things, from philosophy to politics to art. It was a truly memorable experience.

Another opportunity also arose from this research: the opportunity to teach. I assisted Dr. Carlson as a Teaching Assistant for the class I had helped to plan over the summer, and it was a blast. Seeing some of the things we talked about and conclusions we had reached over the summer brought up for discussion in class, and seeing some of the students reach those conclusions themselves, was certainly rewarding. Participating in smaller group discussion in which I could walk around and hear everyone's individual thoughts on the matter at hand was also



Screenshot from BioShock (2K Games, 2007)

interesting, as so many different viewpoints can give perspective on issues that had never even occurred to me. The students were in conversation with some of the work Dr. Carlson and I had done over the summer, and to have new light shed on some of the more difficult topics was invaluable.

All through this process, Dr. Carlson and I have still been revising the paper we presented at the IPA conference. We've met as often as we could, usually once a week, over the last academic year to discuss new findings, read new articles, and write up our thoughts in order to revise our paper into the best it can be in the hopes of getting published. The ongoing paper-writing process has been valuable to me as it helps to hone my argumentative skills and makes me ensure that I am considering every point of view that may be relevant to the issue we're discussing. We're finishing up our final edits now, and will hopefully hear back sometime during the summer. All in all, this has been a rewarding and enriching experience beyond what I could have imagined, and I am grateful to Dr. Carlson and the philosophy department here at Wabash as a whole for this opportunity.

Visiting Speaker Explores Racial Bias in Science

On April 20th, the philosophy department welcomed Andrea Sullivan-Clarke to campus to give a public lecture and to visit Matt Carlson's philosophy of science class. Dr. Carlson's students had read some of Sullivan-Clarke's work in preparation for her class visit, and welcomed the opportunity to discuss a piece of philosophical work with its author! During the lunch hour, Dr. Sullivan-Clarke presented her lecture, entitled "Misled by Metaphor: Ingrained Analogies and Science," to a packed audience of faculty and students from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. In her talk, Sullivan-Clarke argued that a "race as species" metaphor dominated the scientific study of race in the 19th century, and showed how reliance on this faulty metaphor led scientists to false, and in many cases harmful, conclusions. Reflecting on this case, she argued that contemporary science should be more philosophically attuned in order to avoid being "misled by metaphor." The philosophy department was quite pleased by the turnout at the talk, and by the discussion between philosophers and scientists that it sparked.



Professor Hughes Honored for 25 Years of Service

At the annual Faculty-Staff Recognition Luncheon on Tuesday, May 9, **Prof. Hughes** was honored for her twenty-five years of service to Wabash. The following remarks were presented at the luncheon.

Cheryl Hughes has served Wabash College for twenty-five years as a thoughtful and dedicated teacher, researcher, administrator and colleague. She has served many years in the roles of chair of the Philosophy Department, Associate Dean of the College, Chair of Humanities and Fine Arts Division and Co-chair of Cultures and Traditions. As Editor of the series Social Philosophy Today, Hughes edited volumes with topics such as "Race, Social Identity and Human Dignity," "Environmental Philosophy as Social Philosophy," and "Truth and Objectivity in Social Ethics." She has published in the premier journals of feminist theory (Hypatia) and continental philosophy (Continental Philosophy Review). She was the recipient of the McLain-McTurnan-Arnold Excellence in Teaching Award. Her work with freshmen philosophy courses on friendship and science fiction regularly brings students into the philosophy major. Her steady and careful teaching style draws students into important questions in ethics and bioethics, continental philosophy, philosophy of commerce, theories of justice, and feminist theory, encourages them to read carefully, and gives them the vocabulary to sustain high-level discussion over contentious issues and intimidating texts.



Lobermann Receives J. Harry Cotton Prize

Buddy Lobermann was honored with the J. Harry Cotton Prize at the Awards Chapel on April 27. Each year the department gives the award to the student judged to have done the best work in philosophy during the year. Buddy's philosophical acumen was on display at this year's Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship and Creative Work, where he presented his paper, "The Language of Phenomenology," which he wrote for Dr. Carlson's Senior Seminar on the Philosophy of Mind.

The prize is named for James Harry Cotton, Professor of Philosophy at Wabash from 1947-1961 and, after three years on the faculty of Harvard Divinity School, from 1964-1969. He is the author of *Royce and the Human Self*, as well as other books and many articles. One "succeeds in being a philosopher," he wrote, "only as in some measure he makes his neighbor's passions, desires, his struggle to be somebody, live within himself as well."

Fall Course Offerings:

- PHI 109-01: Videogames and Philosophy, Carlson, MWF 1:10
- PHI 110-01: Philosophical Ethics, Hughes, T TH 1:10
- PHI 218-01: Philosophy of Commerce, Gower, T TH 2:40
- PHI 219-01: Topics in Ethics & Social Philosophy: Feminist Theories, Hughes, MWF 2:10
- PHI 240-01: Ancient Philosophy, Trott, MWF 11:00
- PHI 269-01: Topics in Metaphysics & Epistemology: The Epistemology of the Internet, Carlson, T TH 9:45
- PHI 270-01: Elementary Symbolic Logic, Carlson, MWF 10:00
- PHI 345-01: Continental Philosophy, Hughes, MWF 9:00
- PHI 449-01: Senior Seminar: Plato and Baldwin, Trott, T TH 1:10



CONGRATULATIONS TO
PROFESSOR CHERYL HUGHES

ON HER APPOINTMENT AS THE

CHARLES D. AND
ELIZABETH S. LAFOLLETTE
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
IN THE HUMANITIES

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