



# Department of Philosophy

Kansas State University

## Newsletter

June 2022

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## *Note from the Chair...*



Greetings, Philosophers!

It is now some time since we were in a position to report on the department. But the worst exigencies of the pandemic having passed, we are now back in our offices and no longer frantically moving course material online, offline, and back online again. Most happily of all, Rationalitea—Thursday afternoon tea and cookies with students and faculty—has resumed!

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[Chair's letter, continued from page 1]

Even as we return to normalcy, changes loom. We will lose Shanna Slank and Reuben Stern over the summer—Duke has made them an offer they couldn't refuse. We will be joined by four visiting assistant professors in the fall, Susanna Melkonian-Altshuler (UConn, philosophy of language and logic), Jack Himelright (Notre Dame, metaphysics), Dan Buckley (Indiana, epistemology), and Jason Matteson (Arizona, applied ethics). Some of you will remember Jason as a fellow undergraduate—he completed his BS in philosophy here at Kansas State in 2000. We look forward to a year filled with conversations among our new faculty.

All of forty five students have graduate since the spring of 2019, including 19 this academic year. Folks have found employment or places in programs from Vanderbilt to UCLA, and from Northwestern to Texas, though some have remained closer to home at Nebraska, KU or Washburn, and a few have stayed right here in the Manhattan area. For those of you in the area, or who might be passing through, give us a shout. We are ever pleased to see our alumni, whether well-seasoned or newly minted. And in the area or not, we welcome news of your doings—send us email, if you have the time, and say hey. Among those we've heard from recently, Eileen Johnson has taken a position as Bioethics Coordinator at Nicklaus Children's Hospital; Emily Detiveaux, Ashley McCall, Ashlyn Schultz, and Mallory Williams all finished their law programs this year; and Kregg Howell is married and settled in a newly purchased home in Wamego, though running the Carquest branch that keeps my old Honda Civic running (God love ya, Kregg).

I wish you all the best, and, until the next newsletter, Happy Reasoning!

Bruce

## DOUBLE MAJOR SPOTLIGHT



### Taylor Schumann

Independence, Missouri  
Class of 2023  
Psychology-Philosophy

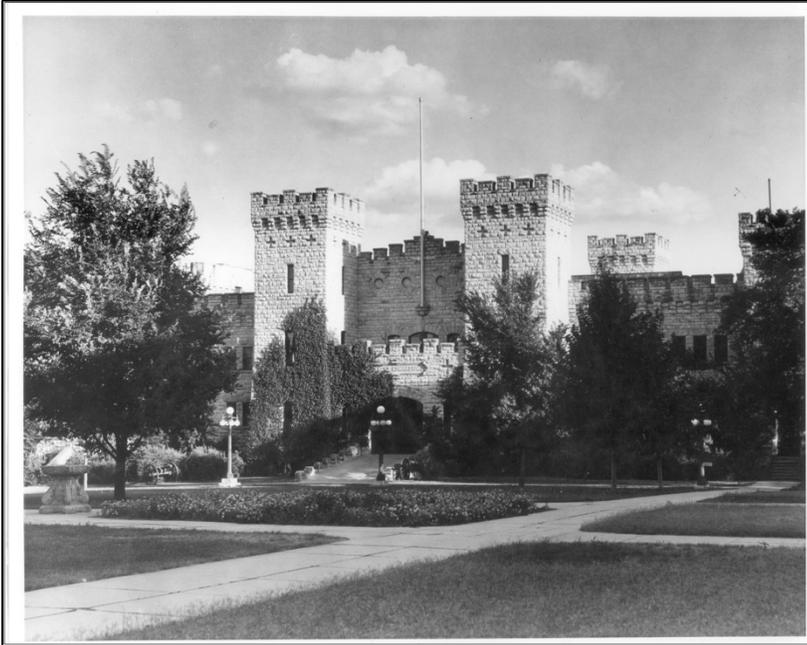
#### How did you find philosophy?

My first year at K-State my advisor recommended a moral philosophy class to me to complete a required credit.

#### Why did you decide to continue studying philosophy?

I really enjoyed the moral philosophy class I took and it challenged me to think about issues in my life and around the world from a new perspective. I also enjoyed thinking about why I believe in and support certain actions and beliefs. I also really felt that my argumentative and critical thinking skills were strengthened and therefore my experiences in my other classes were enhanced.

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## ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT



### Hannah Bretz

Hutchinson, KS

*Class of 2021*  
Philosophy BA with a  
certificate in Conflict  
Analysis and Trauma  
Studies

#### **What have you been up to since graduating from K-State?**

I am currently a first-year law student at Brooklyn Law School in Brooklyn, New York.

#### **What is your favorite/most exciting/most frustrating philosophical idea to think about?**

I would probably say the Problem of Evil. It is a good experiment, especially when engaging in debate. Thought experiments, whether in History of Philosophy or Metaphysics, always were of particular interest for me.

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[Double Major Spotlight,  
continued from page 2]

#### **Why do both?**

I think doing both just offers a more well-rounded thought process. When you think about something like free will, for example, not only can you explore the concept from a philosophy perspective you can also delve into the psychological aspects of how one's idea of free will affects their personality. I think the two complement each other very nicely and I'm interested in both, so I figured, Why not do both?

#### **What are your plans for after graduation?**

Since I am graduating a year early, I plan to substitute teach for a little bit so I can travel as much as possible. I would like to start traveling overseas because it's a little bit more difficult and I would rather see those places now before I decide exactly what I want to do for a career or if I want to continue school.

#### **What will you be doing 15 years from now? Any philosophy?**

I would love to be in a job(s) that challenge me while still being something that I love. I honestly try not to plan too far into the future since almost nothing ever goes as planned. But I do hope to be "settled"—that is, I hope that I've done all the traveling to other countries that I want and I hope to find a place I'd love to live. I hope that both philosophy and psychology are still a big part of my life.

[Alumnus Spotlight, continued from page 3]

**Does philosophy still feature in what you do?**

Yes, certainly. I find my background particularly useful in constitutional law when discussing complex reasoning behind SCOTUS decisions. My writing philosophy course has been very useful, because Bruce taught us how to cut out “fluff” in our writing. This has also been good in terms of explaining difficult topics in a legal document without being incredibly long-winded.

**How has philosophy affected you? (We want to hear the good and the not so good!)**

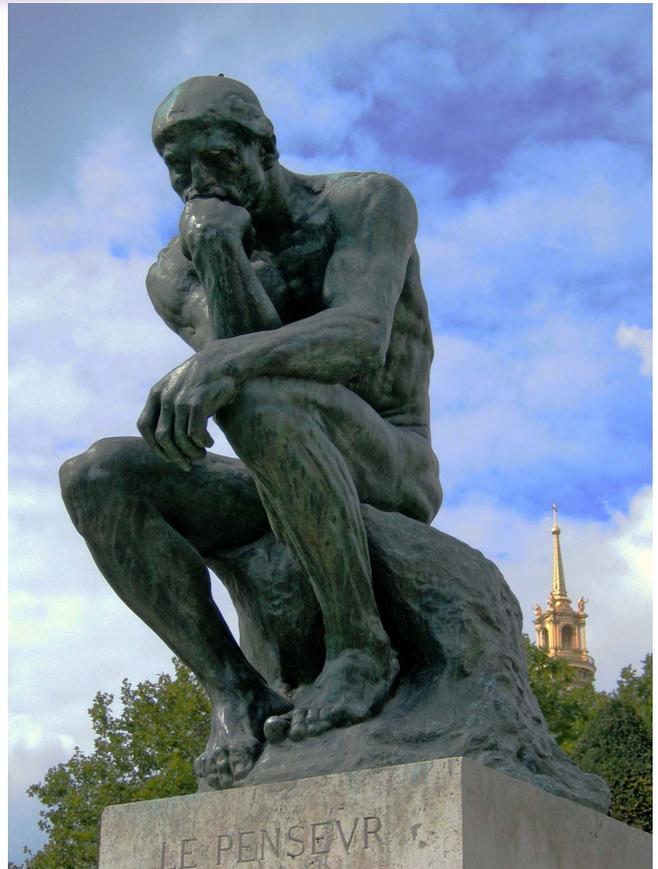
Philosophy has affected my thought processes on virtually every topic. My background in philosophy has developed my critical thinking abilities, particularly in issues which may be presented as black and white. Decision theory and symbolic logic have impacted how I approach issues or miscellaneous tasks. It has also been fun—I love playing mind-games with my friends and family. They think that my understanding of thought experiments is brilliant.

**What will you be doing 15 years from now?**

Hopefully practicing law! I am uncertain as to which field I would like to go into, but as of now I am particularly interested in criminal defense, personal injury, or family law.

## FACULTY CORNER

Shay Logan and Graham Leach-Krouse continue their adventures in logic and philosophy of mathematics. Shay is hosting Professor Francesca Boccuni from University Vita-Salute San Raffaele for some weeks this summer. He is also working with our recent graduate, Indera Coffel, on a formal model of decisions in cancer treatment as part of a grant from the Johnson Cancer Center. Graham is working hard to develop a new program in the College of Arts and Sciences called “Integrated Computer Science”—the integration involving a non-trivial dose of the humanities, on the theory that if we are to have AI it had best be sensible AI. Amelia Hicks is working on her new podcast venture, funded in part by her Marc Sanders Philosophy in the Media Fellowship for Podcasting. Jon Mahoney continues his work on democracy and religion in central Asia.



## MORE ABOUT...

### Amelia's podcast project

#### *What are you most excited about?*

I'm creating a philosophy podcast about neurodivergence (common forms of neurodivergence include autism spectrum conditions and ADHD). Discussions of neurodivergence too often overlook the experiences of neurodivergent people. And many science-focused discussions of neurodivergence ignore crucial philosophical questions about neurodivergence. The goal of the podcast is to explore a wide variety of neurodivergent experiences, and use those experiences as springboards for philosophical reflection about human neurological differences.

#### *How did you get interested in this work?*

I have a personal interest in autism spectrum conditions. And the more I learn about autism, the more I realize just how little we know about it, and how sloppy most of us are when it comes to reasoning about human neurological differences. Public debates about neurodivergence need to include more neurodivergent voices--and they also need more philosophical rigor.

#### *What are you most excited about?*

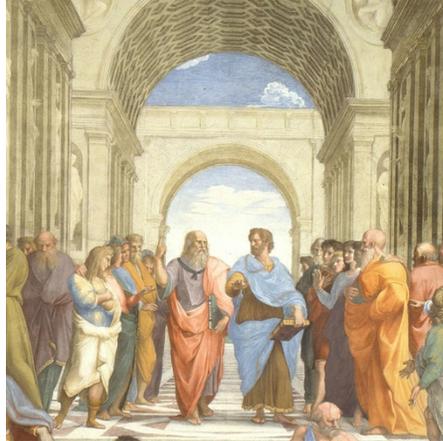
The most exciting possible outcome is that I'll produce a philosophy podcast that non-philosophers will actually want to listen to!

### Graham's new program

I'm the director for a new major in the college of arts and sciences, called Integrated Computer Science, or ICS for short. ICS lets you combine an existing major, minor, or certificate, with a full major's worth of computer science topics. You get a full set of programming classes that equip you to work as a programmer in a lot of different domains. And that programming expertise is combined with integration electives that teach you about the social, cultural, and ethical (that's where philosophy comes in) dimensions of what you do as a computer programmer.

Over the last few years I've been developing free pedagogical software to help students at KSU learn logic better and have better philosophical discussions online. My experiences there got me interested in broader questions about the ethics and economics of software design and distribution. I also ended up believing that there's an under-the-radar kinship between philosophy and programming. Both are about defining things clearly, and about getting beyond your initial idea of a problem in order to see it for what it really is and find a novel solution. And both reward the creative use of formal logic and formal languages.

I'm excited for everyone who is going to be joining the program. But I've been having an especially great time talking to the folks who are beginning to combine philosophy majors and minors with integrated computer science.



## Learn more!

About the Marc Sanders Philosophers  
in the Media Initiative:

[marcsandersfoundation.org/2022-media-fellows/](https://marcsandersfoundation.org/2022-media-fellows/)

About ICS:

[ksu.edu/ics](https://ksu.edu/ics)

**Your support counts!**

Your generosity to the Department of Philosophy helps to support our mission. In these times of government cutbacks and increased tuition, gifts from alumni and friends—those who value the role of philosophy in education—make an extraordinary difference in what K-State can offer. Scholarships, in particular, help us attract the best students and ensure that we can give them the support they need to succeed.

To donate to our efforts, please go to  
[givecampus.com/campaigns/17442/donations/new](https://givecampus.com/campaigns/17442/donations/new).

Contributions to **the Tilghman Excellence Fund** can be made by selecting that fund from the 'Designation' radio box. The Tilghman fund is used at the discretion of the head to support both undergraduate and faculty research, fund scholarships, and underwrite speakers, at the discretion of the Head. Contributions to **the Scholarship Fund** (code Q12395) or to **the Faculty Development Fund** (code F35415) can be made by selection 'Other' in the 'Designation' radio box and then entering the code for the preferred fund; those donations support scholarships and faculty research, respectively.

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