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This issue of the newsletter is packed with stories and information about our students. The content certainly is appropriate for this time of year, when we graduate so many students and recognize their many achievements.

In this issue you will learn about the students that we have identified for their outstanding work in our four programs, the annual hooding ceremony for our graduate students, and other news about current students and alumni. Also, below are the names of all the students who graduated from the department in May.

On behalf of the entire department faculty and staff, let me say how proud we are of the accomplishments of all these students. We will miss their presence in our classes. We will miss their visits to our offices. We will miss their many penetrating questions, their insights, and their passion for joining us in studying deep questions, classic texts, and diverse cultures.

Higher education in the United States faces many challenges today — the lack of state funding, an assault on the value of the humanities, the student debt crisis, and much more. But one thing has not changed and we believe never will. There remains a powerful joy and satisfaction in working with students, in seeing them discover new ideas and think in new and innovative ways. This joy and satisfaction gives purpose and meaning to our work.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

Congratulations to the Class of 2015

The end of the academic year always means having to say goodbye (we hope only “see you later”) to the many students who enliven our department and our teaching. Congratulations to all of the following students.

**MA students in Religious Studies:** Joshua Scott, Matthew Sheffield, and TK Waters.

**Asian Religions and Cultures majors:** Rebecca Center, Kyle Huff, Brandon Kerr, and Christina Paige.

**Philosophy majors:** Forrest Deacon, Parker Hanna, Alexander Jacobs, and Timothy Witthuhn.

**Religious Studies majors:** Casey Bray, Gabrielle Canant, John Corum, Kyla Dozier, Maryruth Drescher, Kara Lengeman, Emily Potts, Jeffrey Prewitt, Katherine Taylor, Patrick Thompson, Claire Winter, and Timothy Witthuhn.

**Classical Studies minors:** Natalie Hayden and Jeffrey Prewitt.

**Philosophy minors:** Casey Downey, Laura Haagen, and Hannah Wilson.

**Religious Studies minors:** Savannah Burke, Allee Flener, Nicholas Johnson, and Margaret Whitlock.

Many thanks to all of these students for being a part of our programs and our work during the last few years.
Outstanding Students Receive Awards

Pictured from left to right are Dr. Lawrence Snyder (Associate Dean of the Potter College of Arts & Letters, students Erika Brown, Tyler Prochaska, Matthew Sheffield, and Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo (Department Head of Philosophy and Religion).

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion names and recognizes a student for outstanding work in each of its four programs. This year the award recipients were:

- Erika Brown, junior, Philosophy
- Matthew Sheffield, MA program in Religious Studies
- Jeffrey Prewitt, senior, Religious Studies
- Tyler Prochazka, senior, Asian Religions and Cultures

Congratulations to each of these students for their excellent work. Each student received an engraved award from Potter College as well as a monetary gift from the department. Gifts from the department are made possible by generous donations from alumni and friends of the department.
Hooding Ceremony

Each spring the Religious Studies faculty hold a ceremony to bestow masters hoods on graduating MA students. This year, three students were “hooded” by their thesis advisers as family, friends, staff, and faculty looked on. Pictured above (from left to right) are Joshua Scott (MA graduate), Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Matthew Sheffield (MA graduate), Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, TK Waters (MA graduate), and Dr. Nahed Zehr. Mr. Scott and Mr. Sheffield were advised by Dr. Bain-Selbo and Ms. Waters was advised by Dr. Zehr. Congratulations to all three students!

Scholarship Winners!

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion selects outstanding students for three scholarships. Two of the scholarships go to students in philosophy. This year, Casey Fortney, junior in philosophy, received the Dr. Larry D. Mayhew Memorial Book Scholarship. This scholarship is in memory of Dr. Larry D. Mayhew, a long-time member of the philosophy faculty here at WKU. And Erika Brown, junior in philosophy, received the Jonathan Andrew Evans Merit Scholarship. This scholarship is in memory of Mr. Evans, who was a graduate of the philosophy program. On the Religious Studies side, Cayla Baughn, junior in religious studies, is the recipient of the Kentucky Clergy Economic Education Foundation Scholarship. The scholarship is given each year to an outstanding returning student in religious studies. Congratulations to all three scholarship recipients!
Dr. Audrey Anton, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, gave three talks during the spring semester. In February, she presented at the Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Her paper was entitled “Retrospective Moral Responsibility and the Desert of Praise and Blame.” In April, she was the guest of the Ancient Mediterranean Club at Austin Peay State University, where she gave her paper was “Desert or Consequences? Aristotle on the Justification of Praise and Blame.” Finally, in May she presented “Why Are Bad People Bad?” at the local Society for Lifelong Learning’s “Food for Thought” program.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head of Philosophy and Religion, was a panelist reviewing the documentary film Happy Valley at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. The meeting was held in early April in New Orleans.

Mr. Marcus Evans, Instructor in Religious Studies and graduate of the WKU MA program in Religious Studies, was awarded funding to attend McMaster University in Canada. He will begin the PhD program in Religious Studies this fall.


This spring semester ended with Dr. Mukonyora coordinating a research workshop on Western Kentucky University’s Green River Preserve in Hart County, KY. Ten members of the American Academy of Religion, all involved in place-based pedagogies on religion and ecology in the southeast region of the United States, presented papers on current teaching and related research endeavors. The main goal of Place-Based Pedagogies is to support each other’s scholarship and create an academic book on religion and ecology.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, gave the 3rd Annual Study of Religion Lecture at Western Kentucky University. The annual lecture is held in April, and recognizes a department or regional scholar’s work in the study of religion. Dr. Samuels’ paper was entitled “Creating Unity amidst Diversity: Buddhism and the Politics of Religion in Contemporary Malaysia.”

As you consider your contribution to the New Century of Spirit campaign for Western Kentucky University, please remember that you can designate your gift to the Philosophy and Religion Department. Your contributions are critical to the life of the department and its students.