

RUTGERS PHILOSOPHY

Newsletter

Spring and Summer 2013



We're moving!

Goodbye Seminary Place, hello Gateway Transit Building! The department will be moving out of Seminary 1 and 3 into our own floor of the Gateway Transit Building this August. **Peter Klein** answered our questions about the move.

The Newsletter: You sent out an email saying that we're moving in August? Is that still the expected timeline?

Peter Klein: Our current buildings are scheduled to be torn down by the end of August and the plan is for us to move in mid-August. So far, everything is on schedule for that.

They have started the actual conversion of the "shell" space in the Gateway building into space designed for us.

The Newsletter: What will stand out about the new space?

Peter Klein: Perhaps the best feature is that the seminar/colloquium room, the library space, the flex space, the kitchen space, and the computer-desks will all be contiguous. That will greatly increase interaction among us - something that our current buildings hindered.

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Peter Klein: The seminar/colloquium room will have a sound-proof accordion wall that makes it possible to divide into two spaces. It will hold more people comfortably, have better acoustics, and be much nicer overall.

Some of the offices will not have windows directly to the outside but all offices will have ample natural light directly or indirectly from transom windows.

The furnishings will be much, much, better.

There will be no mold-smell or uneven floors!

The heating and air conditioning will work!

We will have Starbucks and the BBQ place ["Brother Jimmy's BBQ"] in our building.

Given the proximity to the train/bus station, it will be easier for our graduate students, faculty, and visitors to get to our philosophy home.

We won't have the great banisters and the stained glass windows, but we will have better IT and each office will have a phone. We'll have an elevator and a place to "park" bicycles.

We won't have to worry about occasional floods in the lower levels of Seminary 1 and 3. We often wondered whether the line in the RU Alma Mater - *for has she not stood since the time of the flood on the banks of the old Raritan* - was meant to point to our relatively short existence. Many of us thought that meant last week!



Rutgers cleans up on job market

Despite it being another tough philosophy job market year overall, Rutgers ended up placing an incredible 12 grads in post docs and tenure-track jobs!

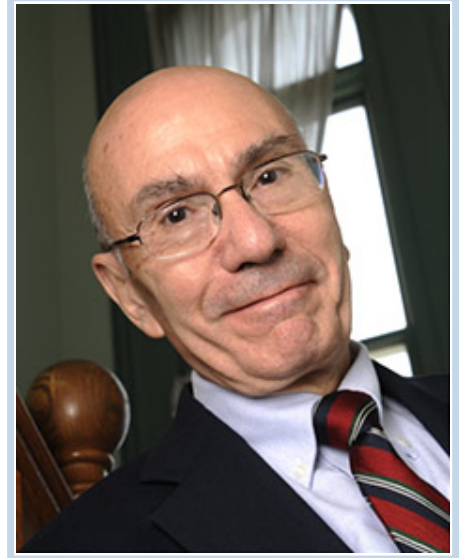
Below is the final tally from outgoing Placement Director **Jeff McMahan**, who comments: "As you'll see, our results are spectacular." Congratulations grads!

Joshua Armstrong	UCLA (TT), deferred for UPenn (post-doc)
Nick Beckstead	Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford U. (post-doc)
Heather Demarest	U. of Oklahoma (TT)
Richard Dub	Swiss Centre for the Affective Sciences, U. of Geneva (post-doc)
Preston Greene	Nanyang Technological U., Singapore (TT)
Ben Levinstein	U. of Bristol (post-doc), U. of Sydney (post-doc)
Zachary Miller	U. of Oklahoma (TT)
Alex Morgan	Center for Integrative Neuroscience, U. of Tübingen (post-doc)
Carlotta Pavese	Duke U. (TT), deferred for NYU Bersoff Fellowship
Blake Roeber	U. of Notre Dame (TT)
Carrie Swanson	U. of Iowa (TT)
Jennifer Wang	U. of Georgia (TT)



Stich launches largest ever cross-cultural study of intuitions

Stephen Stich and **Edouard Machery** (HPS – Pittsburgh) will be leading the study. The research team will construct philosophical vignettes designed to elicit intuitions in five different areas of philosophy: epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language. A pilot study is currently underway in collaboration with research team members in Japan, Brazil, and India. The vignettes will ultimately be tested in 20 different countries across 5 continents.



The project is funded through a \$5.3 Million Templeton Foundation grant awarded to **Justin L. Barrett** (Fuller Theological Seminary) for a project titled “The Science of Intellectual Humility.” About \$4 Million of the grant is being distributed to 16 “sub-grantees” for projects related to the overall theme of Intellectual Humility. One of these 16 is the Stich-Machery project, titled “Intellectual Humility & Cultural Diversity in Philosophy: an examination of the extent and implications of cultural diversity in philosophical intuition.”

Stich and Machery have been collaborating for over than a decade.

Stich: “I first met Edouard at a conference in Paris in 2000... We talked about his work on concepts and I invited him to spend a year here as a visiting graduate student at Rutgers. He ultimately spent two years here. During that time, he was a very active member of the research team that did some of the earliest work in experimental philosophy... At last count we have co-authored seven papers, with a number of others in the pipeline.”

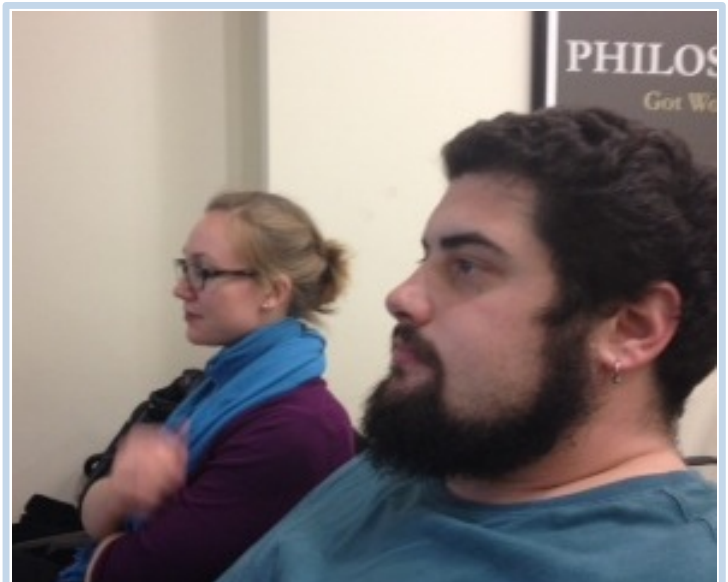
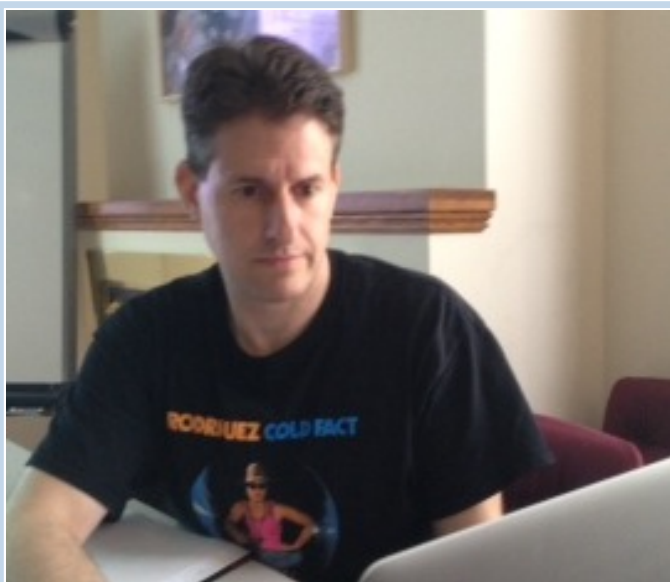
Rutgers professors **Jonathan Schaffer** and **Ernest Sosa** are also on the Advisory Committee for the project. Prof. Stich expects data collection and analysis to be completed in about a year.

Rutgers hosts philosophy of physics conference

Rutgers hosted Structure in Physics, a conference on the philosophical implications of contemporary physics, April 26 and 27.

The conference opened with professor **Gordon Belot** (Michigan), who discussed the curve-fitting problem. **Jenann Ismael** (Arizona) delivered "What Entanglement Might be Telling Us," which explored the relationship between quantum entanglement and spatiotemporal event ordering. **James Ladyman** (Bristol) concluded the first day with a discussion of the relationship between physics and metaphysics, with some asides about quantum mechanics. **Jill North** (Cornell) launched the second day of the conference with a talk on the structure of spacetime. She was followed by **Laura Ruetsche** (Michigan) who led a discussion on the interpretation of quantum field theory. Our conference concluded with a talk by **David Wallace** (Oxford). Dr. Wallace's section concerned structural realism and the relationship between theories, models, and reality.

The conference was organized by **Barry Loewer**, **Jonathan Schaffer**, and **Mike T. Hicks**, and videos of some of the lectures can be accessed on our department YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/user/rutgersphilos>.



Philosophy Club and Phi Sigma Tau had a busy semester

The undergraduate Philosophy Club had five major events this semester. First, on March 4th, world-renowned bioethicist **Arthur Kaplan** (NYU) spoke on the subject of face transplantation. On March 26th, the club convened to screen and discuss **Astra Taylor's** film *Examined Life*. **Dean Zimmerman** gave a talk on April 17th entitled "Property Dualism and Substance Dualism." On May 3rd, the club hosted its inaugural Colloquium Bazaar / Knowledge Show, an event that gave students a chance to present and discuss their work with a broad audience. The club also hosted a "Philosophy Café" on Rutgers Day.

The philosophy honor society Phi Sigma Tau began hosting a reading group, which had two events. The first piece discussed was our own **Jonathan Schaffer's** "On What Grounds What". Grad student and grounding whiz **Tobias Wilsch** came along to share his expertise. The second event, facilitated by **Will Fleisher** and **Beth Henzel**, was a discussion of **Nick Bostrom's** "Infinite Ethics."



Spring grad talks...

This Spring we continued the venerable tradition of holding grad student talks on Thursday nights. **Mary Salvaggio** opened the semester by presenting a view of the justification of memory beliefs that respects contemporary psychological theories of how memories are constructed. She was followed by **Stephanie Leary**, who gave a theory of how reasons of all sorts are metaphysically grounded, and **Lisa Miracchi**, who explained how appealing to competence can help us understand intentionality. Next on the lineup was **Kurt Sylvan**, who told us why veritism, the view that truth is the only fundamental epistemic norm, does not face the swamping problem. When the prospective students came to visit, **Mike Hicks** won them over with his talk on natural laws (complete with a hilarious powerpoint!). Next **Ricardo Meña** presented a theory of vagueness designed to avoid the problem of higher-order vagueness. Finally, **Peter van Elswyk** rounded out the semester by defending a contextualist semantics of pejoratives.

... & colloquia!

The Spring Semester Colloquium Series started off in February with a talk by **Seth Lazar** (ANU) on the ethics of war, attempting to justify the principle of distinction between combatants and non-combatants. The annual Mesthene Lecture featured **Hartry Field** (NYU) on "Vagueness, Truth, and Restricted Quantification." **Sam Scheffler** (NYU) presented on the role of death in giving sense and meaning to life. In the final Colloquium, **Ofra Magidor** (Oxford) dispelled "The Myth of De Se Content", arguing for an assimilation of the phenomenon to Frege's Puzzle.



Talent show lets philosophers show off

Simon and **Kathryn Goldstein** hosted another incredible Philosophy Talent Show. Simon and **Marco Dees** (adorably but supposedly unwittingly dressed in identical shirts) started things off with a performance Camille Saint-Saens's *Feuillet d'album* for four hands on the piano.

Simon and Kathryn also performed solo piano pieces: Simon played J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in B^b Major* and Katherine played Bach's *Invention No. 1* and an original arrangement of Joanna Newsom's "Clam, Crab, Cockle, Cowrie."

Kate West read the poem *Artless* by Brenda Shaughnessy and **Katherine van Elswyk** read the Billy Collins poem *Marignalia*.

Georgi Gardiner gave us another incredible *poi* (fire-spinning) performance.

Nick Tourville taught us an incredible contortionist trick, and **Lucy Jordan** did some contorting of her own, showing off some acrobatic yoga moves. **Megan Feeney** and **Peter van Elswyk** had a speed-typing showdown (the outcome was a tie!), and **Nick Beckstead** finished off the performances with a tear-jerking rendition of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* (Jeff Buckley-style) on the guitar.



The inaugural Princeton-Rutgers-Penn Social Epistemology Workshop

This Spring the department put the "social" in social epistemology by hosting the inaugural Princeton-Rutgers-Penn (PRP) Social Epistemology Workshop on April 6th. **Yoaav Isaacs** (Princeton) and **Daniel Berntson** (Princeton) started the day by evaluating formal proposals for epistemic aggregation, then **Harold Parker** (Pennsylvania) explained Plato's social epistemology. **Ryan Muldoon** (Pennsylvania) provided a simulation-informed understanding of the practices of scientific research, and **Georgi Gardiner** (Rutgers) raised a problem for conciliationism about peer disagreement. **Kurt L. Sylvan** (Rutgers) closed the workshop with a discussion of how groups possess evidence. We hope this will be the first in a sequence of social epistemology events involving the three institutions.

Letter from the chair

Another spring term behind us and another fall term starting. Perhaps the biggest news is Philosophy's move to our new digs in the Gateway Transit Village. The new space is wonderful and once things are set up properly, it will be a fantastic new home for the department. However, for the moment it is CHAOS, with tons of boxes and furniture crowding our seminar room and what will eventually be very nice shared space. Personally, I have found solace in chanting the Oakley ski and snowboard team slogan ("Peace in the chaos") to myself while in the department. Kudos to **Ernie Lepore**, **Peter Klein** and **Doug Husak** for doing the lion's share of the work in making the move happen.

Our shiny, brand new colleague Professor **Elisabeth Camp**, who we ruthlessly stole from Penn, has now begun making official appearances in the department to the delight of all. A big Rutgers Philosophy welcome/shoutout to Liz!

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In other hiring news, we are pleased to announce that **Marilyn McCord Adams** and **Robert Merrihew Adams** have been appointed as Distinguished Research Professors in the philosophy department at Rutgers, beginning this Fall. Each will teach one graduate seminar per year for at least the next three years. A big Rutgers Philosophy welcome/shout out to the Adams' as well!

Hiring the Adams' is part of the creation of the Rutgers Center for the Philosophy of Religion, which **Dean Zimmerman** directs. The Center's activities include a reading group, talks (e.g., this Fall, Robert Adams will give a lecture on pantheism, and **Dani Rabinowitz** will talk about justice in Maimonides), conferences (e.g., a religious epistemology workshop in Spring 2014, a conference on theism and value theory in 2015), and extended visits by senior scholars (e.g., **Peter van Inwagen** next academic year, **Eleonore Stump** the year after). Several post-doctoral fellowships will be advertised soon. During its first three years, the Center is being supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. By Fall 2016, Rutgers expects to have completed the endowment of the William P. Alston Chair for the Philosophy of Religion. The department has already begun the search to fill the Alston Chair.

We are also welcoming our new first years to the department. As usual, it appears to be a fantastically strong group: **Ben Bronner**, **Eddy Chen**, **Nico Kirk-Giannini**, **Olivia Odoffin** and **Steve Woodside**. Welcome to the philosophical nirvana that is Rutgers Philosophy.

This past year on the job market was shaping up to be a steep climb for the Department. With a record number of Ph.D. students coming out in a very tough market, the word 'trainwreck' kept coming to many of our minds. But Rutgers rose to the occasion placing TWELVE people in post docs or tenure track jobs. It's pretty clear that we were the big winners this year on the job market this year - a nice sendoff for **Jeff McMahan** in his final year as placement director.

Here's to a great fall term for all and...

...you stay classy, Rutgers Philosophy!

-Jeff King

Would you like to donate to Rutgers Philosophy?

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Thanks to our contributors!

Mercedes Diaz, Megan Feeney, Georgi Gardiner, Michael Hicks, Lucy Jordan, Jeff King, Peter Klein, Stephanie Leary, Stephen Stich