

# PHILOSOPHY AT GUSTAVUS

January, 2010

## Reflections on a Visit

*Professor Erazim Kohak was featured on the cover of last year's newsletter. He appears again this year, to mark his visit to campus in mid-September. Professor Kohak gave two public lectures, participated in a discussion of his work *The Embers and the Stars*, attended classes, and engaged in informal conversations with a host of students and faculty across the campus. It was wonderful to welcome back Professor Kohak, and to introduce his wife to Gustavus. Several alumni of the department also showed up, when they learned he would be on campus; clearly Professor Kohak's teaching made a profound, life-changing impact upon his Gustavus students.*

Ricardo Torres, '10

There had been anticipation for his arrival since the previous semester, but I did not see the need for such an uproar. Did anyone really know who this man was? It was said that his writings were erudite, prescient even; they were...but who was this man? Deane [Curtin] suggested that I speak to the man while he was on his sojourn here; perhaps he could serve as a connexion in Europe or he might provide advice that would be beneficial to my career...he did. He spoke of democratic principles and radical change; he spoke of history as lived experience and as lived through experience. When I met him he told me that I looked like a philosopher, or at least spoke as if I were one. He said I must be a philosopher because I was 'very thoughtful'. He spoke to me of current events and even of the issues most pressing in my native country; I was surprised to say the least. How could someone who lived at such a distant be more cognizant of American and Latin American issues than most who live here?



At the same time, he held very classic, European sensibilities, naturally, and he spoke of good wines and decadent foods as well as places of great interest that one might enjoy if one ever had the opportunity. We spoke of film and literature and he asked me what and who it was that he should be watching. I told him that I would make him a DVD and present it to him before he departed; instead, he wrote down his address and told me to send it to him. Prague? 'It is not at all expensive,' he assured me 'in any case, tell me how much it was and I will send you the postage money.' I may be interpolating here, but he told me many things that I needed to hear at the time. It is clear that people with his character are needed in all parts of the world: receptive, but cultivated and assured; uncertain enough to entertain new ideas, but confident enough in their present knowledge. When someone asks, "what is a philosopher and what do they do?" the previous sentence is perhaps not the answer that one should give, but it feels as if it should exist as a necessary or recommended quality. Was ist philosophie? Erazim may tell you.



# The 2009 SENIOR COLLOQUIUM

The six senior Philosophy majors (Caleb Phillips, Laurel Hoch, Kate Goodpaster, Rhea Muchalla, Joe Hillman and Jeff Nichols) spent the spring of their final year at Gustavus developing original work and proving themselves as philosophers and scholars. Last spring's Colloquium encouraged the seniors to leave Gustavus with a validation of their status as philosophers and curious, intelligent, critical, and sensitive individuals.

We started the semester with the question (to which we still might not really know the answer...): How does one do philosophy? Gradually over the semester and through varied and experimental methods, we inspired in ourselves and each other new ideas that grabbed us well enough to build out of them sophisticated argumentation for relevant and significant conclusions and calls to action. We did philosophy and found collective and individual passions within it.

While the topics of all the projects were diverse, everybody engaged with each other's projects. One method for brainstorming, building, and revising was working with partners with whom we met and exchanged written work throughout the semester. Partners had at least somewhat related topics to begin with, and really became invested in each other's work and morale by the end of the semester. In addition to individual projects, as a group we read *We Have Never Been Modern* by Bruno Latour and *Cosmopolitanism* by Kwame Anthony Appiah. These books were challeng-

ing and sparked animated discussion. The "book group" discussions of these works broke up the focus on the thesis work, though we often found ways to tie the points presented in the books to aspects of our theses. The semester was certainly successful in a variety of ways, and hopefully our class will keep in touch as we move into the future.

Find their senior theses online at the department webpage: <http://gustavus.edu/academics/philosophy/seniortheses.php>



## CELEBRATION OF CREATIVE INQUIRY

*Laurel Hoch, '09*

On the evening of Friday April 30th, Gustavus students from all areas of study came together for the second annual Celebration of Creative Inquiry. Students presented papers, senior theses, and research within their discipline. Walking around the rooms and rooms of posters, videos, and other types of presentations, one found oneself happily overwhelmed by students excitedly sharing knowledge. During my presentation, I was approached by students, professors and staff of all areas of knowledge. Surprisingly those with other areas of interest were of the most help with my unfinished thesis. I found that the most special part of this Inquiry is after your explanation and during the exchange, the discussion that follows.

See video of the event at <http://gustavus.edu/epep/learn-More/index.cfm?story=215>.

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# TORIANO SANZONE: Dog training as philosophy



This November, alumnus Toriano Sanzone held a weeklong residency. During his sojourn, he gave two public readings of his most recently published work *Wolfkeeper*, in addition to meeting with the Pan Afrikan Student Organization and serving as keynote speaker at the Diversity Leadership Council banquet. Having read some of his work, it is safe to say that his philosophical studies have affected Toriano greatly. His work is very philosophically inclined and provoked questions such as: are all decisions really based on love or fear, what do the lives of other animals tell us about our own, and is true that we all have an inner beast, and if so, how can we conquer it? These are questions that are certainly all within the purview of philosophy. Here is a letter that Toriano sent for students prior to his visit:

Dear Fellow Gusties:

My name is Toriano Sanzone and while attending Gustavus Adolphus College, I majored in Communications and minored in Philosophy. Over the course of ten years of working in the music industry as marketing-promotions specialist and now working in the dog training world, I would say, without a doubt, that my philosophy classes and psychology classes have aided me the most “in the REAL WORLD.” When working with artists I quite often had to use critical thinking skills that were mastered by studying philosophers such as Decartes and other philosophers in College. When training dogs I am constantly thinking and working to link the connection between humans and dogs, which I view as a problem of logic that requires additional critical thinking. Questioning how things work and how people think is what I do all day; life is a philosophy equation. I wish that I had taken more philosophy classes because I use it every day.

Find Toriano online at <http://www.thewolfkeeper.com/>

**Hey, drop us a line! Send us an email!  
Give us a call! Come visit!**

We'd love to hear what you are doing in the world; the stories of your lives keep us going during many a long stint of grading papers.

We'd also love to put you to work  
mentoring our current students!  
Keep reading for more information  
about how you can help.  
(No, it doesn't involve cold, hard cash!)

## VOCATION & SERVICE

*Senior Jennifer Lee has just returned from spending the fall semester studying at University College, London.*

I am a crossbred Philosophy and Political Science major. This summer I was fortunate enough to partake in three insightful activities. I found myself politically philosophizing all summer long from different perspectives.

I interned at Mayor Christopher B. Coleman's Office in downtown Saint Paul, Minnesota. I worked with Erica Schumacher from Invest Saint Paul (ISP) and I worked closely with the District Council members of Saint Paul for my most prominent project at the Mayor's Office. Through our strenuous efforts, we put together an Alley Sweep event that brought together the Mayor's Office, the Saint Paul District Councils, other City of Saint Paul departments (such as public works), and diligent volunteers. We spent a day meandering through different neighborhoods of Saint Paul and cleaning the alleys. Apart from regular debris, we found 15 gallons of paint and hazardous waste, large and small appliances from dishwashers to microwaves, and various furniture.

I also worked independently with a non-profit organization called Substance. Substance embraces nonpartisan progressive activism through music and art. I believed that Substance's mission was important and I spent most of my summer promoting Substance through my own networks as well as into the Hmong Community. Hmong activists, musicians, and organizations were interested in the idea behind Substance but they could not work alongside Substance, due to their own priorities. Nonetheless, this challenge was a great experience that brought me to question my own philosophical inquiries on political activism as well as refining them.



Finally, I volunteered with the Hmong Youth Education Services (HmongYES) in Saint Paul. After HmongYES accepted me as a volunteer, they quickly offered me a position as a personal mentor to an 18-year-old Hmong

student who has been living under foster care since the age of 14. I was not only a mentor but I also became a friend who spent hours outside of mentoring with the student, and I became someone that the student could trust and rely on. We accomplished a lot together for the student's future.

I did not have to go very far to find interesting people, places, and ideas. I learned a great deal about community, individuals, and different perspectives on change. The opportunities contributed to my philosophical insights by placing my views under intense scrutiny. These experiences helped me mature as a philosopher and as a person.



### GUSTAVUS TURNS 150!

In preparation for Gustavus Adolphus College's 150th anniversary, we seek stories from alumni about their time here. What do you remember from your years in the Gustavus philosophy department? Send us an email or drop us a line with one of your favorite--or least favorite!--stories. We'll pass it on.



# Calling Home:

## Journals From India

*Caleb Phillips, a philosophy and environmental studies major who graduated in 2009, travelled to India in January last year with Deane Curtin, to study Buddhist India. Below is an excerpt from his study journal.*

I don't know if I wrote about Kolkata & Mother Teresa's tomb, nunnery, & orphanage. I openly cried reading of her uncertainties & tribulations, I cried over her unending-ness concerning her goals & deeds. She spoke of emptiness, of being a temporary vessel for grace & goodness. Some of her words tied neatly into Nagarjuna's, but only some. The nunnery was calm & austere, simple & welcoming. I recited a Hail Mary at her tomb, feeling the tug of my history & the beauty of that place. The museum was touching beyond compare. Small children begged at their mother's command outside. The orphanage filled me with hope [with] smiles & laughter & innocence confined by a safe place...

We are leaving from here again, as snow-capped mountains walk about in their blankets of clouds. We witnessed a perfect sunrise from Tiger Hill with Everest pointing her nose up for us to see...

I have reached the last week of my sojourn which has become our sojourn. I want to return home & want to stay. I wish to hike & climb & meditate here. For now, though, I am just sitting, writing, & wearing my Tibetan style shirt, waiting for my compatriots to rise & for breakfasting.

24 January 2009, from Pelling, Sikkim

I include this excerpt from my journal intentionally, though I cannot exactly specify that intention. It reflects on the spirituality and of the ecology of thought and biology I witnessed, but hints at the ways in which spirituality can feel both familiar and foreign. Mother Teresa was a foreigner, a stranger in the strange land of West Bengal, practicing a form of Christianity brought to India, not of India. All the same, she succeeded in making it something of India by recognizing the needs and customs of that place, of Kolkata.

Such was not my aim; all the same, something like adaptation to strangeness did happen. India encountered me, while I underwent my encountering. Something intimate that was also invasive occurred; something about this process was also anaesthetizing. At this point, under a psychological and cultural scalpel, I admitted my sense of despondence, of exhaustion, of eagerness to return home.

This was not homesickness, which I have known profoundly, and I was able to recognize it as something else early. The malaise has become clearer now that I have engaged in overcoming it; it has shown itself to be the recovery from that sort of experience, the recuperation of myself now into something I was not before. After any surgery, one is not what one was; one may be well or on the way to healing, but one is first beset with greater, even dangerous weakness. My physicality is healthier, more so than before, but I can say that I am undergoing mental—I would add spiritual if I could avoid the kitsch of saying such—mending. I returned drugged, intoxicated by the reality I left and the reality to which I was seeing again, experiencing it with a profound sense of novelty. Even as India pulls away through time, I cannot shake this novelty; and with it, novelty's dual sense of fear and excitement about the world.



# THE INDEPENDENCE OF GHANA



During the 2009 school year, Ghana's 52nd birthday was celebrated by the philosophy department with a gathering in the Courtyard Cafe. Ghana is the first country in Africa to gain its independence, and its first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was a philosopher, which was what prompted our celebration.

Ghanaians at Gustavus--student Baffour Appiah- Korang and Professors Sidonia Alenuma and Paschal Kyoore--spoke and answered questions for an audience in the courtyard café; in addition Ghanaian food was served in the cafeteria. Topics included the Independence of Ghana, President Kwame Nkrumah, and modern Ghana.

Many Philosophy professors and students attended the celebration, but so did other curious individuals walking by



the Ghanaian flag, after eating native Ghanaian food upstairs. The discussion, speakers, and whole celebration were a unique first experience for Gustavus.



## THE MUSICAL B.A.R.

There exists a new organization on campus. Founded by philosophy majors, yet consisting of music majors and those who are musically inclined, the Musical B.A.R. has become the source for extracurricular music here at Gustavus. A frequent question has been: what is the Musical B.A.R.? I quote from our Constitution:

Members of the Musical B.A.R. are students of Gustavus who believe that the definition of music is contentious and equivocal. Acknowledging this fact as our motive, we seek to understand all forms of music and its differences, whether they be social, cultural, or due to simple differences in taste. Understanding and acknowledging this conviction, we as advocates for musical understanding make a vow to the making of all music, in honor of all music.

Co-President Jonathan Monk felt that the musical community of Gustavus lacked global/modern perspective; he felt that the repertoires and performance-experience of music majors and players was lacking, if at all existent. Thus, the Musical B.A.R. was born; B.A.R., by the way, stands for the 'birth-and-rebirth' of music or the performing and creating of music both new and extant. Since our inception, we have held, sponsored, or had musicians perform at distinct events every week. The Musical B.A.R. holds an event every month, titled Open

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# ERICA (LUCAST) STONESTREET



Erica Lucast Stonestreet presented her paper, “Love as a Regulative Ideal in Surrogate Decision Making: Toward a ‘Best Interests’ Standard” for the Gustavus philosophy department on November 4th. Erica graduated from Gustavus in 2000 and is now a professor at the College of Saint Benedict.

In her paper, as Erica explains it, she “argues that currently recognized standards of surrogate decision making in medicine focus too much on values that miss what’s at the heart of the problem of surrogate decision making. Instead, I propose that love has a normative aspect that can better account for the way surrogate decision actually get made.”

If you are injured and find yourself incapable of making important decisions regarding your own health, what sort of premises would you like those who will make them for you to be operating under? Erica focuses on the ways that people who are unable to make their own choices are represented by their surrogates.

It was Erica’s position that rather than the current strategies of acting in the person’s best interest, or in a way that is most respectful of the individual, the surrogates should act out of love, or to act as though they were making the decision for a loved one of theirs. This option shows the best possible course of action for the serious and intimate

nature of the surrogate-patient relationship, because it goes beyond simple respect and calculated best interests, to a deeper and more personal level that is better suited to the task.

B.A.R., where musicians of all striae, backgrounds, and experience-levels are able to gain, and hone any existing, skills.

The organisation continues to thrive and expand as we strive to bring new and valuable music to the Gustavus community. If you ever find yourself in St. Peter and are in need of a tune, let us know.





*Alumna Nancy Hanson Nash writes: I didn't send on this photo for last year's philosophy newsletter, when it would have been more timely, but I think it's still pretty good, AND Sarah Palin, my ex-governor, is unfortunately still in the news. In the photo, I'm in the middle, and to my right is that noted terrorist Bill Ayers. Teddy Gold, to my left, died in the NYC townhouse bombing that sent Bill underground for all those years. The setting is a lecture room in the GAC Student Union building basement, in the fall of 1969. P.S. I am still singing.*

## REFLECTING ON A PHOTOGRAPH

*Nancy Hanson Nash '70*

I have recently celebrated my sixtieth birthday, and Gustavus Adolphus College has invited me to observe the fortieth anniversary of my college graduation. It seems an appropriate time to reflect on how I got to Gustavus and on my experience there. My ties to the college were not the usual ones of having family members or close friends who had attended. My connection was a clerical one, formed before I was born, and continuing, strengthened but unacknowledged, until I went there. Adolph Johns was the long-serving pastor of my home church, an Augustana Synod church in North Dakota. He was a stern old-school Swede, revered by the entire congregation, all of whom considered church life their most vital form of community. The many Johns children went to Gustavus, the boys becoming pastors and then trustees of the school. Pastor Johns was succeeded, when I was five, by Warren K. Johnson, a large, ungainly Swedish farmer who had served in World War II. Back home on the farm, he heard the call of God to the parish ministry while plowing a field. He used the GI Bill to attend Gustavus, and then went on to seminary and ordination. For the next twelve years, at least once a week I heard Pastor Johnson give the best, most inspired of all sermons: impassioned calls for bringing justice to our world, informed by deep scholarship and with rigorous intellectual underpinnings. Warren's heroes, in addition to the Old Testament prophets, were Dietrich Bonhoeffer and later, the young Dr. Martin Luther King. In my middle teen years, Warren and I talked books and ideas often in his cluttered church office.

I had grown very disillusioned with my public high school education, almost to the point of dropping out. I did not see myself going right on to even more institutionalized education, so I made no college plans (considered odd for a valedictorian, I guess). I read and traveled, becoming more and more interested in the field of philosophy. Toward the end of 1967, I applied to the University of Chicago, intending to major in philosophy. Although I was accepted, I was told that freshmen could only enter the school in the fall and not mid-year as I proposed. (I wanted to go quickly, before I changed my mind.) Gustavus gladly took me in, however, gaining another National Merit Scholar in the process for those important college statistics.

My five semesters at Gustavus Adolphus College must certainly rank as the oddest preparation ever for a liberal arts college degree! The late sixties was a tumultuous time off and on campus, and Gustavus, too, was trying things out, experimenting with scheduling (the 4-1-4 plan), personnel and special programs. My two-and-a-half years there saw three different men as presidents of the college, a transition from the Swedish pastoral model of Edgar Carlson (so reminiscent

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of my pastors) through a status quo interim president to the hiring of a successful businessman, Frank Barth. I was accepted into a brand new, and very short-lived, "honors program," under the guidance of Professor David Harrington. As far as I know, its only feature was that those in the program would have no institutional requirements at all, beyond the requirements of their departmental major. My transcript is the strangest sight: not one history course, not one math class, and only one science course, with twice as many music credits (not even my minor) as my major of philosophy. Partly because I didn't need to wait for sequenced courses, I was able to pile on the credits and graduate a year-and-a-half early. This meant I had no class as such to relate to, no conventional college community. I came a semester into what should have been my freshman year, and I left a year ahead of those same students. I never know any of the alumni names in the Gustavus Quarterly.

*Nancy Hanson Nash today, with ukelele*



## ALUMNI NOTES

As I mentioned last time, my philosophy degree really helped me look at the world and my life in a completely different way than I would ever have imagined. Over the past 22 years, I have dedicated my career to development work overseas. I remember being fascinated by a J-term Philosophy course on Artificial Intelligence which really made me look at technology and how it affects our lives in a new light. Five years ago this month, I started work on mobile phone banking and this work has been truly rewarding and revolutionary. Check out our website at [www.mobilephonebanking.Rbap.Org](http://www.mobilephonebanking.Rbap.Org) for more info. I joined the international advisory board of Mobile Money Transfer and just came back from presenting at the MMT Summit in Dubai and will chair the Asia Pacific MMT event in December in Manila.

John V. Owens '84  
Chief of Party, MABS

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Steve continues to follow the lead of Deane and not run his company like Machiavelli in *The Prince*. Best paper I ever wrote. Life's journey is not to be laid to rest in a well preserved body, but rather to come screaming in sideways totally worn out, yelling "holy crap what a ride!"  
Steve Bloom, '87

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Looking forward to the next issue. I'm (relatively) safely ensconced at the University of Minnesota, Office of the Sr VP for System Academic Administration (as you might guess, I tend to go with "UMN SAA" when in a rush). I'm a web developer there, working on a variety of database-driven web sites and web applications to support a wide variety of projects for the U of M system, including post-secondary preparedness, faculty awards programs, and various internal communications. Hope all is well with you and the rest of the faculty,  
Gabe Ormsby '93

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Fond greeting to everyone at GAC philosophy! I too am delighted to hear about my fellow alumni and the department. Right now, I am in my fourth year in the PhD program at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, a location my wife and I are enjoying very much. I am teaching ethics this year after having taught logic for the previous three. I completed my masters degree last spring and am currently working on my dissertation on akrasia and its effects on David Hume's and Donald Davidson's views on moral psychology (by the way, I convey greetings to George from Jack Bricke, one of my committee members). I also am assisting a University study on early childhood language acquisition, which has given me a great opportunity to make connections among empirical researchers in speech and language studies and has been fascinating from a philosophy of mind, language, and science perspective. I anticipate being finished up and on the job market for the 2011-2012 academic year.

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Much to my regret, I haven't been back to Gustavus since graduation now over five years ago. I've recently had relatives move to Minneapolis and I intend to visit in the near future. I would welcome the opportunity to participate in a "Mom, Dad..." event, as it would allow me yet another reason to head north.  
Brandon Gillette '05

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While it would be a miracle if I were to address my parents [Mom, Dad...I'm a Philosophy Major] (they've long gone to their rewards), it is a lesser miracle to tell you what I've been doing. It's been 17 years since I received my B.A. in Philosophy & Religion (*magna cum laude*) from GAC. You may recall that my goal in life then was "to be wise" in the mode of old great philosophers like Socrates. I've tried hard to do that.

I was 52 then, and you can do the math! I'm not a kid anymore, but perhaps with encroaching age is encroaching wisdom. I have kept my set of *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and refer to it occasionally to keep the wisdom coming. I read as voraciously as ever and try to keep the old brain active. Greetings to all of you!  
Jeanie Reese '92

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Greetings from Texas. I am a 63 graduate and have used my philosophy major from GA all of my life. I am a Marriage and Family Therapist and a Lutheran clergy person (inactive). The logic courses I took from, (can't recall name exactly) Yovan Brichek have fed everything I have accomplished in my young life. I guess I took every course he taught. I have worked in prisons and with addicts and their families a good share the time and following their logic patterns is of upmost importance. I do self-relations therapy which mixes logic with hypnosis and family systems theory. Currently I have just finished a design for a workshop entitled *THE HEART OF FORGIVENESS*, using the Lords Prayer as a daily life experience. Two other therapist and I will be sharing it with churches and various therapy groups. I am interested in relating philosophy to real life issues such as mental health, politics, and religion.  
Steve Larson '63, D.Min., L.M. F.T.

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Gerald Christianson is Emeritus Professor of Church History at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he has taught early and medieval church history since 1967. He received his education at Gustavus Adolphus College, Augustana Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago. During a year-long sabbatical in Geneva, Switzerland, he did further research at the University of Geneva. Before teaching in Gettysburg, he was pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Gary, Indiana. He has served as visiting professor at Lancaster Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School.

In 1980, Dr. Christianson founded and for several years chaired Music, Gettysburg!, a major musical series formed by a partnership between the seminary and the community. Since 1976 he has hosted or co-hosted the weekly radio program, "The Seminary Explores," over WGET and WGTU. He frequently performs as narrator for "American Song" with baritone Wayne Hill, featuring "Music of the Civil War" or "The Gospel Song Tradition." He serves on the board of the Adams County Historical Society and is a member of its Design Committee for a new Civil War museum in historic Schmucker Hall on the seminary campus.

In 1990 he received the Pennsylvania "Salute to Teaching" award for outstanding teachers from the Pennsylvania Academy for the Profession of Teaching and in 1995 he was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Citation from his alma mater, Gustavus Adolphus College. He founded the International Seminar on Pre-Reformation Theology at Gettysburg Seminary and since 1986 has served as co-chair of the Gettysburg Conference, a biennial meeting

of scholars co-sponsored by the International Seminar and the American Cusanus Society. The Conference has been responsible for a number of publications on the history and theology of the century before Luther and the Reformation.

Among his recent works, he is the co-author or co-editor of *The Church, the Councils, and Reform: The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century* (2008), *Reject Aeneas, Accept Pius: Selected Letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)* (2006), *Introducing Nicholas of Cusa: A Guide to a Renaissance Man* (2004); and *The Spirituality of the German Awakening*, a volume in the series *Classics of Western Spirituality* (2003).

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Rhea Muchalla '09 is currently in her first quarter of graduate School at the University of Oregon. At the end of October Rhea presented her Senior thesis created under her advisor Lisa Heldke at the Northwest Philosophy Conference. The paper is entitled "A Bin/ary Culture: Interrogating the way Culture Functions in Everyday Life". In addition Rhea has been elected to be a co-coordinator for the University's feminist philosophy reading and interest group (RIG) that comes both out of the Philosophy Department and the Center for Women and Society. Although she does not miss the cold of Saint Peter, she sure does miss the warmth of the people there.

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Shel Silvernail '90 is an obstetrical nurse at Hennepin County Medical Center. She reports that "the situation at HCMC is rather grim right now. We are fortunate, in my department, to have faced little in the way of actual cuts. However, we are again being asked to do more with less - a ridiculous request when repeated annually. All of the "fat" in our budget was trimmed years ago - now we are just understaffing, putting off basic repairs and delaying our hiring decisions. I am working with my fellow nurses to get people to appeal directly to their legislators to let them know how dire our situation is. We have a strong nursing union that lobbies on our behalf, and obviously HCMC makes its own appeals, but legislators are people, and I like to think that a personal appeal can make a difference. In encourage anyone who is concerned to educate themselves and to contact their own legislators on our behalf. If you would like more information, feel free to email me directly, at [shel.silvernail@gmail.com](mailto:shel.silvernail@gmail.com).

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I graduated in June with my Masters in Social Work and am now the Legal Risk Adoption Coordinator at Adoption Alliance here in Denver. I'm developing a new adoption program for families who want to adopt children from foster care and are willing to take children whose parental rights haven't been terminated yet. I'm also taking post-graduate couples and family therapy training

My partner, Alex, and I competed this September in the Bearable Adventure Race and had a blast. That was a water crossing with a pool raft we had to inflate ourselves, a 10-mile mountain bike ride, a 4-mile run, and an orienteering challenge. We had to carry our bikes over obstacles and through a creek, wade up the creek about 100 yds., and crawl over straw bales and through a mud pit. LOTS of fun!! Next up: the "Chilly Cheeks" run/bike races in December, January, and February regardless of the weather. Could be 65 degrees or 2 feet of snow and the race will go on!

Mary Stone '91



## Consider yourself Invited!

*In recent years, you may notice a burst of enthusiastic interest in your life, coming from the philosophy department at Gustavus (this newsletter being one manifestation of that enthusiasm). Rest assured, we're not winding up to ask you to donate a million dollars to the department (though if you happen to HAVE a million dollars and would LIKE to donate it to us, we can think of several very wonderful things to do with it!). For the members of the department (four of whom have taught together now for TWENTY ONE YEARS, prompting Lisa to call herself the "world's oldest junior colleague"), the contact we've had with many of you has been a source of real joy and, well, shucks, inspiration to keep on doing what we do. Your lives are so very interesting to us, and we are so proud to know that you came through this department (whether you did so when we were here, or passed through this campus years before even we Ancient Ones came on the scene).*

*Know also that our students appreciate the contacts they have with you, whether informally, at one of our twice-yearly "Mom, Dad" dinners, or more formally, through something like an internship at your place of work, or a mentorship relation. It really IS a relief to them to know that majoring in philosophy is not the disciplinary equivalent of jumping off a building onto a cement slab. Heck no; it's more like being one of those cliff divers you used to see on the old "Wide World of Sports." You know the ones? They execute these spectacular dives, while always making sure to spring well clear of the rocks at the base of the cliff. So, without further ado, here are this year's invitations to all you cliff divers out there.*

### COME BACK! COME BACK!

The Gustavus Philosophy Department would like to invite you (yes, you--no, not that person sitting next to you on the bus) to return to campus to be part of our semi-annual dinner/discussion series, "Mom, Dad...I'm a Philosophy Major." This series features our wonderful alumni, talking about their lives now, with a particular emphasis on how the study of philosophy has influenced that life in any way. You can write a talk or speak extemporaneously. You can tell stories or recite aphorisms. We're just anxious to hear from you. In return, we can promise you travel expenses, a decent meal, and a wonderful conversation. We hope you will consider volunteering. (And yes, we can now do plane fare! If you stay overnight, we'll even give you a bed and breakfast!)

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### WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

What are you doing these days? Your classmates want to know! Drop us a line, and we'll include your news in the next newsletter. If it's okay with you, we'll also post it on our department webpage, in the "Where Are They Now?" column. This collection of alumni stories is a wonderful testament to the fact that the study of philosophy is wonderful preparation for just about anything anyone would want to do with their lives. When students say "what can we DO with philosophy?" we can send them to the webpage to browse those stories.

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JOIN!

Join our informal alumni network! Would you be willing to be a mentor, advisor, sounding board, internship supervisor or...? to a current Gustavus philosophy major? If so, send Lisa a brief email, describing a bit about yourself and your work, and outlining the sort of role in which you'd be interested. We'll make a listing of all volunteers available to students, who may then contact you if they're interested in what you do.

## SPRING 2009 MOM, DAD EVENT--AND AN INVITATION TO BE A MENTOR

Our spring "Mom, Dad, I'm a Philosophy Major" dinner featured three speakers. The Rev. Paul Tidemann, of the class of 1960, spoke of the fact that his philosophical training gave him "a means to study the basis of Christian faith critically and in ways that are life giving. ...I as a pastor was called to find...how to help people immersed in the labor union movement in the face of sometimes unjust employment practices, how to apply the truth of God's word of love and justice to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who are still victims of horrible systems of injustice in both church and society, how to be in respectful conversation with Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i and others who live out of a different religious base from mine and how I can learn from them and have their wisdom enrich my faith and life...." Pastor Tidemann's complete remarks can be found on the Philosophy Department's webpage; click on "Why Study Philosophy?"

Shel Silvernail, class of 1990, notes that she "took advantage of the rebounding economy of the early 90's to secure a prestigious job tending bar while taking further classes and researching career opportunities. Three years later, in an unforgettable Peter Pan moment, I abruptly sold my house, car and possessions and blew it all traveling around Europe. I returned to the states with a renewed soul and went on to work in such various career fields as catering, publishing, academic research, event management and education before settling in on nursing. I can currently be found on the night shift in Labor and Delivery at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis or cheering wildly for my two daughters at swim meets throughout Minnesota." Shel spoke of the ways in which her philosophy training has proven invaluable to her when it comes to analyzing systems, policies and procedures in a large, complex medical facility that serves some of the most marginalized people in our society. (See Shel's alumna note on the previous page for the latest at HCMC.)

Tad Marinac, class of 1988, is now a Vice President of Valuation and Advisory Services for CB Richard Ellis, a Fortune 500 company, owner of Nokomis Appraisals, as well as an appointed Commissioner with the City of Minneapolis Board of Tax Equalization. He didn't start out that way; he notes that, in the early years after graduation, he slogged through a series of "low paying and less than satisfying jobs" including "union stagehand, bouncer, computer operator, temporary accountant, tax preparer, computer assembly, salesman, loan officer, branch manager for a financial institution, and staff appraiser. Tad spoke of

(continued on next page)

# Faculty Members' Activities

*Deane and George haven't disappeared from the scene; they just got this request too close to deadline to be able to respond to it. As this issue goes to press, Deane is off to India to look for the Dalai Lama with a group of Gustavus students. Find all the philosophy faculty online at our website.*

## DOUGLAS HUFF

This past summer, Doug learned that he was one of four recipients of the prestigious Mario Fratti-Fred Newman Political Playwriting Contest based in New York for his play, *A Far Shore*. Doug's play explores the life of the Indian politician, activist, philosopher and orator, B. R. Ambedkar. The contest recognizes plays that contribute to the discussion of social and political issues that affect the contemporary world. For more about the contest and Doug's play, see <http://news.blog.gustavus.edu/2009/07/02/huff-wins-playwriting-contest/>. (Ed. note: there's a particularly fetching and youthful photo of Doug accompanying the article. Lisa accused him of hauling out his high school prom picture, but no, in fact, the photo was taken this summer.) Doug also hit the bigtime by being the featured "Gustie of the Week" in the *Weekly*. You can read the full piece at <http://weekly.blog.gustavus.edu/2009/10/16/professor-doug-huff-a-true-renaissance-man/>.

## PEG O'CONNOR

I think it is important to take my philosophical interests in new directions, never losing sight of the practical importance of philosophy. I know; many people might scratch their heads and wonder how philosophy can be practical. I think that most people, if they could give themselves license to do so, would be more philosophical. After all, each of us is (or perhaps I ought to write "should be") concerned with the meaning of life. Is there any more deeply philosophical, personal and practical question? I think not. But I still am. (Just a little Cartesian humor to keep you on your toes.)

To the end of practicality, I am working on a project (that may be an article or a book) about recasting addiction, especially alcoholism, in philosophical terms. While addictions have been medicalized and psychologized, it strikes me that these disciplines alone cannot account for the deeply existential dimensions of addictions. Addicts and alcoholics are deeply engaged with meaning of life questions and answer them in insightful and honest ways.

## LISA HELDKKE

This year, I have been enjoying fifteen minutes of fame as a philosopher of food. I've given talks in Tennessee, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Texas, and I've been asked, by the fourth estate to comment on such weighty matters as "the cultural meaning of peanuts" and "the symbolic significance of turkey." I am one year into my stint as coeditor of the journal *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, a position that is teaching me a great deal about everything from Senegalese body politics, to the matter of how to remove all the identifying meta-data from a Microsoft Word file, so as not to reveal the identity of an author to a reviewer. I comment on the worlds of Gustavus and of philosophy from various bloggy doggy sites: <http://philonhol.blog.gustavus.edu/> (PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY: the blog of philosophical travel and leisure); <http://philosophy.blog.gustavus.edu/> (the Philosophy Department blog); and <http://kitchencabinet.blog.gustavus.edu/> (the blog for the Kitchen Cabinet, the advisory committee for the Dining Service). I'll be on sabbatical during the 2010 calendar year, and am delighted to be leaving my courses in the capable hands of Kara Barnette Grace, a 2005 graduate of the department. While on sabbatical, I plan to advance my breadbaking abilities to world-class level.

## Be a Mentor, cont.

the ways in which his philosophical training has proven useful in a stressful business at an incredibly stressful economic time. He observed that, in his position, he is the one who sometimes "has to tell the bank to shut off the lights," a difficult and painful decision for a business to hear.

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Tad also issued an invitation to the department, and a challenge, of sorts, to his fellow alumni. "One of the great challenges perceived outside is the false limitations of the study and pursuit of Philosophy as a discipline.... A positive 'spin' to this dilemma could be brought about by appealing to alumni to consider mentoring students whether through internship programs or simply serving as sounding boards for their future plans."

In the spirit of Tad's suggestion, we'd like to expand what have come to be our usual invitations to you (to send us your news, to join us for a Mom, Dad dinner), and invite you to consider becoming a part of an informal network of alumni who would be interested in connecting with our students more seriously about the matter of what you can do with a philosophy major. Contact Lisa Heldke if you'd be interested in serving as a mentor or advisor, offering an internship at your place of employment, or simply having an occasional conversation with a student who's exploring a career in your field.

Philosophers are at work in the world; you're everywhere, doing all sorts of interesting, challenging and important work. Our students would love to know about that work, and would be inspired by it. Please consider getting involved.