

ANNUAL REPORT, 2004
(covering the period from last spring to the present, March 28, 2005)

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
John Whittaker, Chair

Departmental Highlights

- Two new assistant professor lines were added -- one in philosophy, now held by Jeffrey Roland (Ph.D. Cornell), and the other in religious studies, now held by Charles Isbell (Ph.D. Brandeis).
- One new shared assistant professor line (jointly funded by Pennington Biomedical Research Center) was secured, beginning in August 2005. This first-ever joint appointment is will be held by Kevin Elliott (PhD. Notre Dame).
- Submission of a request to restore the B.A. degree in Religious Studies
- First-time participation (Kevin Elliott) in a cost-sharing federal grant (NSF). To date we have not heard whether this grant has been awarded.
- The third annual ethics conference will be held this month (April 2005), organized entirely by James Taylor. This year the conference is the annual meeting of the Value Inquiry Conference.
- Progress on hospital internship program (funding for graduate research assistants), with Our Lady of the Lake Hospital. We are now preparing a contract for this program.

Personnel

- John Baker, Professor of Philosophy, will retire at the end of the current semester.
- We have been given permission to hire Alison Denham of Oxford University as a visiting professor for the year 2006-2007 (using funds from John Baker's line)
- Delbert Burkett replaced Roger Payne as Assistant Chair for Religious Studies.
- Greg Schufreider replaced Mary Sirridge as Director of Graduate Studies (M.A. program) in Philosophy
- Francois Raffoul, Associate Professor of Philosophy, was promoted in the spring of 2005.

- The contract of Ina Fandrich, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, was not renewed.
- Charles Isbell was appointed as the Director of Jewish Studies. A ceremony will be held this month to thank the outgoing Director, Rodger Kamenetz, and to welcome Dr. Isbell.
- Associate Professor Art Buehler left LSU for a position at Victoria University of Wellington, NZ
- We have hired Reem Meshal (abd McGill) to replace Dr. Buehler. Meshal's husband, Reza Pirbhai (Ph.D. U. of Toronto) is also under consideration for a position in the Department of History. An international search was conducted for this position offered to Meshal, and two on-campus interviews were conducted.
- Delbert Burkett's nomination to full professor has been postponed until the fall of 2005.
- Preparations are now being made to nominated James Taylor (philosophy) and Jon Cogburn (philosophy) for associate professor rank with tenure.
- We unsuccessfully pursued a minority hire in indigenous religions (principally African and Carribean religions). The candidate was not only an African – American woman, but she was also from Harvard. We will renew out efforts to hire someone in this line next year.
- Our new full-time instructors in philosophy, Jorn Sonderholm and Chris Blakley (both Ph.D's), have done remarkably well; and they fully participate in departmental symposia and in informal student advising.
- The adjunct instructors in religious studies (Pettigrew, Sands, Yadlapati, and Houk – all Ph.D's and "veterans" in the program) are also doing superb jobs. Rabbi Barry Weinstein, who has always been a popular teacher, is conscientiously improving his classroom management and grade distribution. Occasionally we hire Dr. Guy Beck, an accomplished and well published teacher from Tulane, to teach a course for us. This year the course has been "religion and music."
- Lois Edmonds left the office staff last fall. We have been authorized to replace her with part-time help for our office coordinator, Ms. O'Connor; but we have delayed appointing someone in hopes that we might persuade a recently retired LSU staffer to apply. Now it appears that we will hire someone this spring.

Program development

The achievements listed above primarily strengthen the undergraduate and graduate programs in philosophy, but the restoration of the B. A. degree in religious studies is also an important step for us.

The faculty in religious studies continue to feel that they need one more line – a position in Buddhist studies – in order to offer a graduate program in religion.

Graduate Program (M. A. in Philosophy)

The department is in the midst of a Board of Regents “low-completer” review. We are endeavoring to improve our graduation rate of 3.2 students per year, and to this end we are doing the following:

- Encouraging some of our students to take an accelerated, 5-year, B.A./M.A. program.
- Working to establish joint programs with other Ph.D. granting departments, whereby a graduate student would receive his or her M.A. in philosophy in the process of advancing toward the Ph.D. in the other department. At present, we are working with the Department of Political Science. In the future, we hope to work out a similar arrangement with French Studies and perhaps with Public Administration – perhaps even with the Law School.
- Finalizing contractual arrangements for a hospital internship program with Our Lady of the Lake Hospital. Funds from the hospital will be used for a graduate research assistant assigned to work (under the supervision of James Taylor) on projects at OLOL. In effect, this will increase by one the number of graduate assistantships that we are able to offer. In future years, this number might well increase as new hospitals sign on to the idea of the internships.
- Increasing publicity for the program; improving the website, mentioning it at conferences, discussing it with prospective students, etc.

Research/Publications

Several books were published by departmental faculty members in 2004.

- Edward Henderson (ed.), *Captured by the Crucified* (T.T.Clark International; 2004)
- Francois Raffoul, *A Chaque Fois Mien* (in French)(Galilee Publishing, 2004); and a translation of Juan-David Nasio, *Love and Pain in the Works of Freud and Lacan* (SUNY, 2004); also a translation of Martin Heidegger’s last seminars, *Four Seminars* (Indiana University Press, 2004).

The publication of several other books is immanent:

- James Taylor (ed.), *Personal Autonomy: New Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); and a monograph, *Stakes and Kidneys* (Ashgate, 2005).
- Less far along but nearly complete are books by Sutherland and Isbell.

Virtually all of the senior faculty have book projects in various stages of completion.

Approximately 20 articles appeared, in books, refereed journals, and encyclopedias – a little more than one per faculty member per year.

Teaching

The Department –both philosophy and religious studies – consistently maintains averages of well over 4.2 for its general education courses. Teaching evaluations in smaller third and fourth year courses are above 4.5.

The curriculum in both areas is constantly being revised; not only are new courses added or cross-listed, but new rotations are arranged among the faculty to insure a systematic presentation of courses that are already on the books.

Kevin Elliott received a grant in 2004 to do a learning community course this summer with the biology department.

Progress Assessment

A limited review of student papers from majors in 4000-level courses was conducted, but this could be done more systematically and the sample size could be increased. This year as in past years, the Department received several superior papers; and despite the bleak prospects for academic jobs, some of its students go on to pursue graduate work

Grants

As mentioned above, Kevin Elliott is involved in an IGERT proposal to the NSF, which was submitted in 2004. He is not, however, listed as one of the co-PI's

Similarly, John Whittaker was principally involved in the submission of a proposal for a \$300,000 grant from the Metanexus Foundation. That grant application was not successful, but a smaller (\$30,000) grant was obtained from the same foundation. The Collegium for Science and Religion was encouraged to revise and resubmit the larger proposal.

Fundraising

The department, largely through the hard work of Ed Henderson, completed an endowment drive in 2004 for a second Seynaeve Professorship. The Seynaeve enhanced Professorship in Biblical Studies is *already* in place; this second professorship will be centered on Christian studies.

James Taylor and John Whittaker have also been asked to help with a new private initiative that relates to ethics. This is a recent development, however, and the details of the private foundation envisioned by the principal donor have yet to be worked out. It does seem clear, however, that the proposal will involve some LSU connections and therefore some external funding for departmental faculty.