



Mark Siderits Retires

After twenty-seven years on the faculty Mark Siderits has retired. Mark received his BA from the University of Hawaii, doctorate from Yale and came to ISU in 1980. Although he has an extensive list of accolades he will be most remembered by his students for sharing his immense knowledge of Buddhist and Indian Philosophy which for many resulted in a life changing semester. When Shadd Maruna (Professor of Law and Psychology at Queen's University in Belfast) entered ISU in 1989 as a freshman he "had only one ambition in life -- to be a drummer in a big-hair 80's rock band. I chose to major in philosophy and English, basically, because those sounded like the sorts of degrees that would never lead to having to do a real job. After taking an honors class with Mark, though, everything changed. Rock and roll could wait. I wanted to be an academic. To this day, I can remember, word-for-word, almost a dozen snippets of lectures that Mark gave 20 years ago! I've been a "Siderits student" ever since. Had I not taken that philosophy class I might now be a rich and famous, over-the-hill drummer in an aging rock band. But, if I had it to do over, I wouldn't trade a thing that has happened to me over the last 20 years and especially not the chance to learn from Mark." As Tyson Mohr wrote "in my time at ISU, I was lucky enough to get to know Dr. Siderits as a professor, as a thesis advisor, and as a person. As a professor, he demanded that we dedicate the time and energy necessary to understand the concepts presented in the course. As a thesis advisor, he struck the proper balance between guiding my thoughts and allowing me to find my own voice. As a person, he is a good listener and an engaging conversationalist. I am grateful for the guidance he provided and the positive impact it has had on my academic and personal development."



Mark's passion for teaching is balanced by an equal passion for research. His research explores the possibility that contemporary analytic philosophy might have something to learn from the Sanskrit philosophical tradition. In his book, *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*, he shows how Buddhist philosophical tools may shed light on the current debate over the nature of diachronic personal identity (i.e., what it is that makes someone one and the same person over time). He has also done work on Indian and comparative philosophy of language and is currently working on particular issues in comparative epistemology. His most recent book, *Buddhism As Philosophy*, (Ashgate-Hackett, 2007), is a text, with readings, on the Indian Buddhist philosophical tradition. He is also working with Shoryu Katsura on a new translation of and commentary on Nagarjuna's, *Madhyamakakarika*.

In addition to his teaching and research he has contributed to the community as board member and advocate at the Rape Crisis Center of McLean County for twelve years and six years as board member of Planned Parenthood of East Central Illinois. Mark has also given much to the University community by serving as Chair of the University Curriculum Committee and the Council on University Studies. He was a member of the Women's Studies Task Force and Advisory Council and as well as a member of the Asian Studies Curriculum Development Team.

So just when Mark was looking forward to retirement, presenting at conferences, being invited to lead seminars, continuing his research and writing, not to mention traveling, he received a surprise job offer at Seoul National University and accepted the appointment as professor in the philosophy department. The department has 17 members, 13 doing Western philosophy, 4 doing Asian philosophy. He was recruited to help develop a bridge between the two traditions by doing East-West comparative philosophy. He will be lecturing in English as SNU is trying to develop more English-language offerings

Outside of philosophy his interests include cooking (especially Indian cooking), and skiing.

As the new year starts we miss him and wish him all the best!



News from Normal....

2008 has been another memorable year in the life of the department. With completion of renovation of the 3rd and 4th floors, we were able to return home to Stevenson Hall. The department office is still on the 4th floor (412) while most of the faculty relocated to newly refurbished offices in a single corridor on the 3rd floor (323). Our 15-month lay over in Turner Hall provided “training” in living close together, so we are optimistic that the new arrangement will enhance faculty interaction. This was a “life and safety” renovation, which removed asbestos and cleaned and repaired the HVAC system. Our quarters also now sport much needed new carpeting and interior paint. Finally, there are plans, pending funding, to replace Stevenson’s aging, inefficient windows and exterior doors during the present school year.

Again, we have Iris Baird, our “move coordinator”, and Donna Larsen to thank for their extraordinary efforts and effectiveness in organizing our return and following up on lost items and making our quarters more livable than they have been in years.

This year we gave a fond farewell to Professor Mark Siderits who retired after 27 very productive years in the department during which he provided many students with insights into Indian and Buddhist cultures. Mark has decided to spend the next few years teaching at Seoul National University in South Korea where a new crop of his students will enjoy his profound understanding of both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions and his enthusiasm for linking the two.

Completing a successful search for a new tenure track faculty member, Daniel Breyer joined the department as a new Assistant Professor this year. Daniel completed his PhD at Fordham University with specializations in epistemology and ethics. We had hoped to conduct another search this year, since we still have two tenure lines open, but the state budget did not make that possible and we will have to wait for authorization for a search next year.

Alison Bailey, now Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program, has co-edited a uniquely comprehensive anthology, *Feminist Philosophy Reader* (McGraw-Hill). David Anderson's long-term cognitive science curriculum development effort, The Mind Project, has entered a new phase with a \$1.3 million five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health to extend the curriculum for pre-college students. Thomas Simon is spending the year in the United Arab Emirates teaching and doing research on Islamic law at Sharjah University. Chris Horvath continues his strong connections with Northwestern University, where he regularly lectures in the Psychology Department on gender issues. Kenton Machina, who retired from full time teaching two years ago but continues to teach specialized courses for the department, has won a \$1/2 million National Science Foundation grant along with his co-investigator Anu Gokhale, aimed at improving students' attitudes towards careers in science and technology.

Several of our students presented papers at conferences in the last year and we have enjoyed colloquium talks by several prominent philosophers and returning alumni.

We added a new scholarship for a rising junior this year, named for Scott Elliott ('84) and funded by the income from his generous recent gift to the department. This raises the total number of annual student awards in philosophy to three.

With the hard work of faculty, alumni and students, we advance the mission of the department. I especially want to thank alumni and friends of the department who have contributed to our Excellence Fund, which is vital to maintaining the quality of our programs. We are always interested in what our alumni have been up to. Please send news you would like to share to Donna Larsen (dclarse@ilstu.edu) and check out our web site (<http://www.philosophy.ilstu.edu>) for news from the department and other alumni.

All the best!
Jim Swindler



Alumni Day 2007 Connecting with the Net-Generation

We were honored to have Nancy Slonneger Hancock as our guest for Alumni Day 2007. She graduated from ISU in 1986 and continued her studies in philosophy at the University of Nebraska where she received both her Masters and Doctorate. She is now Associate Professor of Philosophy at Northern Kentucky and Director of the Women's Studies Program. Nancy is Editor of "Logic Notes" and a member of the Board of Trustees for the publication *Teaching Philosophy*; President of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers; and former President of the Kentucky Philosophical Association.

In a room of Baby Boomer and Generation X professors sitting next to their Net Generation students Nancy presented her paper "Philosophy for the Net Generation: A Conversation". The premise of her talk was how educators (the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers) could connect and make philosophy relevant to this new generation of students (the Net-geners). As background she covered the characteristics of each generation and then focused on the Net Generation who were born between 1977 and 1997. They are defined by technology: the internet, cell phones, laptops, iPods; world changing events: September 11 and Columbine; family: structured, schedule households and helicopter parents with whom they have very close relationships; and a multicultural, global world in which they are comfortable. Because of technology and the fast paced world in which they live, they are accustomed to instant gratification and answers and are not particularly fond of reading books. To the audience made up of a number of former professors, Nancy poses the crucial question "How can we make philosophy less archaic? How can we make it more relevant to this generation?" What followed was conversation about ways philosophy as well as education in general can connect with the "Net-geners." She ended the discussion by saying that her advice to educators would be to first of all be aware of the difference in how incoming generations learn. Second, is to think about how their particular subject matter can be meaningful to that group of thinkers.

No doubt it felt strange to Nancy to be on the other side of the podium from her former professors as a colleague rather than a student!

Mind Project update

This year The Mind Project, as part of a 5-year NIH grant, completed two virtual lab experiences to introduce middle school, high school and college students to cutting edge developments in neuroscience. Students become brain surgeons in one lab and neurobiologists studying the effects of cocaine on the brain in another. To explore the labs yourself visit our website (<http://www.mind.ilstu.edu>) and click on the K-12 Initiative.

Kenton Machina and Anu Gokhale Receive NSF Grant

Kenton Machina and Technology Professor Anu Gokhale are the recipients of a \$474,000 three-year National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to increase the number of students, especially women, African-Americans and Hispanics, in computing majors.

They will target a finite mathematics course to encourage students to participate in activities showing how mathematics connects with real-life computing in a wide range of occupations. Computing professionals, including women and under-represented minorities from such fields, will interact with students outside of the classroom, detailing their professional lives and their reliance on mathematics to solve real-life problems.

"We hope the project will result not only in more female and minority students in computing majors, but also more student engagement in finite mathematics as well as better articulation between the mathematics course and computing courses," said Machina. "It is also possible that the project will develop more student interest in the Mind Project in cognitive science, also developed with NSF support and deeply connected to computing."

Faculty awards publications, and presentations

David Anderson

Presented "Saving the Epistemic Without Losing the World" to the "Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology" in Frieberg, Germany, October, 2007.

Participated in the "14th Herbstakademie on Theory in Cognitive Neuroscience" in Wildbad Kreuth (Bavaria), Germany, October, 2007.

Alison Bailey

Feminist Philosophy Reader, ed. Alison Bailey, Chris Cuomo, McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Editorial in the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, available on line at <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/publications/newsletters/v07n2/Feminism/Feminism.pdf>

Harry Deutsch

"Relative Identity", revised, posted on the *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, November, 2007.

Review of Jeffrey C. King's *The Nature and Structure of Content* in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, available on line at <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=13165>

Thomas Simon

The Laws of Genocide: Prescriptions for a Just World, Greenwood Press (Praeger Security International), 2008. This completes his trilogy on the treatment of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Todd Stewart

"Justification-Affording Arguments and Corresponding Conditionals" presented at the Illinois Philosophical Association Annual meeting, SIU-Edwardsville, November, 2007.

Elected Secretary/Treasurer of the Illinois Philosophical Association for 2007–2008.

Jim Swindler

Presented "Rationalist Grounds for Pragmatist Democracy" at the 3rd International Athens Institute for Education and Research Philosophy Conference in Athens, Greece, May 2008.

Presented "Autonomy, the Democratic Attitude and Social Change" at the 6th international conference on Collective Intentionality at the University of California-Berkeley, July, 2008.

Presented "Justifying Social Change" at the 25th North American Society for Social Philosophy International Social Philosophy conference in Portland, Oregon, July, 2008.

Student News

Andrew Higgins was awarded Most Outstanding Conference Submission for his paper *Appraising Intelligent Design* which he presented at the SIUE undergrad conference in October, 2007.

Richard Archer was invited to present his paper *Examining Aristotle's "Mean Relative to Us"* at the Truman State Philosophy Conference 2007.

2008 Outstanding Senior – Departmental Award

Andrew Higgins
Bradley Roepke

2008 Scott M. Elliott Philosophy Scholarship for the Outstanding Rising Junior

Jonathan Moore

2008 Kenneth and Marilyn Kennard Scholarship for the Outstanding Rising Senior

Joseph Kinzer

News from alums

Stephen LeFebvre '04

Steve has been pretty busy since he left ISU and is currently working for Uncle Sam again. He was recruited and brought on board as an Equipment Specialist by TACOM (Tank and Automotive Armaments Command) and is working primarily with CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear) and Riot Control equipment. His position is a little difficult to explain but basically he's one of the top technical/logistical experts for Army Decontamination Equipment. Don't worry, he says, he only works with defensive stuff, nothing offensive in nature, and deals with everything from the base procurement/acquisition end to the sustainment side of the house. He's also acting as a Contracting Officer Representative for multiple Army contracts and doing his best to save your tax dollars from all of those greedy contractors out there. Uncle Sam has been keeping him pretty busy and his duties require him to travel quite a bit. In fact his current regiment has him traveling to Japan and Europe at least once a year. He was brought in specifically because of the strange set of qualifications he possesses and he has to say that ISU was a very integral part of his success. He tries to proselytize all that he can. On a personal side he married this year to another ISU alum, Jenny Kiely (Anthropology). They tied the knot in Alaska followed by a cruise to watch the whales.

Steven (Bernardin) Hannah '04

Steve is currently working in the IT Operations group of Seyfarth & Shaw LLP law firm in downtown Chicago. They provide legal services in the areas of real estate, employment, and litigation for larger sized businesses. He works as a Systems Administrator, where he primarily works on ensuring that their data is protected from disaster or hardware failure.

In December, he married, Megan Hannah, an ISU alumnus. She is currently working on getting her Master's in Statistics at Northern Illinois University. Quite often, this makes him want to go back and get an advanced degree.

He's been running more consistently over the past year he since believes that he will be able to run the half marathon in Chicago without too much issue. He will be getting his SCUBA certification in a month while in Florida and has two tests left for the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer certification.

Tyson Mohr '06

Tyson just finished his first year working as an actuary at State Farm corporate in Bloomington. He has found the position to be very challenging and rewarding, and is happy to have found a work situation that is so well suited to his skills and preferences. His wife, Susan, just finished her Masters degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois and they will be moving back to Bloomington. Tyson has been finding his philosophical training to be a powerful asset in his profession, aside from his embarrassing tendency to refer to mortality tables as morality tables.

We'd like to hear from you!

Name _____ Year Graduated _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Drop us a note, email or fax about your activities, career news, family news, and significant events (weddings, births, honors and awards, promotions, changes in employment, personal accomplishments.) Share your news in the "News From Alums" section.

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