

Spring 2020 Newsletter

Rutgers University–Camden

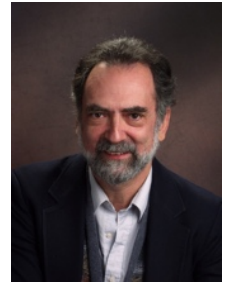
A word from Acting Department Chair Dr. Stuart Charmé:

As I write this greeting for our departmental newsletter, we are in the middle of an unusual spring break. It is unusual because it will include little of the relaxation and even vacation that often comes with spring break. Instead it is a time of growing anxiety and fear in our communities, in our country, and throughout the world as we try to cope with the coronavirus that has spread to every corner of the Earth. This spring break is also unusual because none of us will be returning to campus for the foreseeable future. Even the commencement ceremony is being postponed, according to President Barchi, though your diplomas will be issued as planned.

As you are no doubt aware, most universities in the country are quickly moving their courses online for the rest of this semester. Your instructors are working hard to come up with a plan to continue to study as much of the remaining content of your courses as possible, though I hope you will be flexible in adapting to the necessary changes that will have to be made. Please check Sakai or Canvas for instructions about new assignments and activities in your class.

I fully realize that it is not only your classes that have been disrupted. All of our lives have been thrown into turmoil, with disruptions in jobs and other planned activities. Like you, your instructors are also figuring out how to cope with this new situation. If you find

that factors in this new situation have emerged that are interfering with your coursework, please let your instructors or me know, and we will try to make accommodations as necessary.

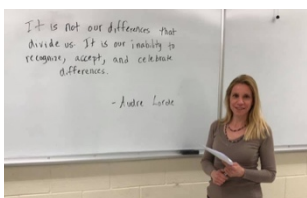


I hope that many of us can use our studies as an anchor in this uncertain time. Crises are times when people are struggling to find meaning in some of the dangerous and threatening aspects of human life. Philosophy and religion have always been essential tools that people turn to in their search for meaning. Hopefully, your instructors will suggest ways that the material in your classes can give you new perspectives on the current crisis.

There is a popular phrase in Hebrew that is often offered to people who are facing difficulties and uncertainties. It comes from Moses' instructions to the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness toward the promised land. He told them "Chazak Ve'Ematz," which means "Be strong and courageous."

May we all have courage and strength as we face the uncertain days ahead.

Stuart Charmé, Chair



Dr. Margaret Betz is an Assistant Teaching Professor of Philosophy and the Department's Undergraduate Program Coordinator. She works on

political philosophy, feminist philosophy, environmental ethics, and the history of philosophy.

Q: You have a philosopher parent, and you are a philosopher parent. What does philosophy have to offer us in our family lives?

A: My father is a retired philosophy professor from Villanova University, and my 18-year-old son is currently taking a philosophy course in his last semester of high school. When my son signed up for

the course, my father took him over to his book shelf and handed him “a good translation of Plato.” My son’s teacher was seriously impressed!

Recently, I’ve been giving more thought to why it is that, among my father’s four children, I’m the only one to pursue philosophy too. My best guess is my father’s mode of communicating with his children was always to engage with us as developing thinkers, posing questions and considerations. It is something I’ve modeled in my own parenting.

Q: Tell us about Philosophy 252: Eating Right, your course on the philosophy of food. And what is the tastiest, most ethical food our readers should try?

A: Eating Right has been my favorite course because we all have strong opinions about food! I cover hunger, food policy and regulations, using animals as food, and other issues. As I say to my students on the first day, “My goal is to make sure you eat more deliberately.” The class ends with a “meal” I’ve prepared that is informed by all that we’ve learned! Last semester I made apple muffins (without sugar!), hummus, and cut vegetables. Hummus is one of my favorite foods. There’s a reason it is a staple for so much of the Middle East. It’s essentially a dip made from chickpeas, and it is incredibly versatile, inexpensive, and highly nutritious.

“As I say to my students on the first day, ‘My goal is to make sure you eat more deliberately.’”

Q: You are currently studying Celia, an enslaved woman in Missouri in the mid-19th century. What interests you about her story?

A: I’m interested in a type of violence I call resistance violence, or violence carried out to protect historically marginalized, targeted segments of the society. It involves more than mere self-defense, and it isn’t reducible to defending one’s life; it often aims to dignify the resistance actor in a system that refuses to acknowledge their dignity.

I’ve published an article on this topic, and now I’m exploring examples of resistance violence among women. I came upon an 1855 case of an enslaved woman named Celia who killed her owner. Celia, who was only 19, was the repeated victim of sexual assault by her 65-year-old owner. She warned him to leave

her alone, and she killed him when he attempted to assault her again.

What is so compelling is that the actor—for instance, an enslaved person like Celia—surely knows they will likely pay the ultimate price for their action, but they choose it anyway. I want to examine why this happens and argue for the legitimacy of such choices.

Q: How does that story of resistance violence matter in our lives? And where will your project go next?

A: I got interested in this topic by things I’ve been witnessing of late. I watched Antifa appear at protests in 2017 and noticed the general negative reaction to them. A friend also made the blanket statement to me that “violence is never a solution.” I disagreed! Complexity demands a more-nuanced understanding. The project has been complicated because, of course, I want to carefully acknowledge the destructiveness of violence. But I also sensed that it’s wrong to assume it’s never a legitimate choice.

My research has focused on African-American resistors because there is so much available, from John Brown and Frederick Douglass to the Black Power movement. I’d like to engage more with how this topic interacts with principles of non-violent civil disobedience and see what type of dialogue emerges.

The Department had a busy winter, and we had a lot planned for the spring: Philosophy Club meetings, the *Year of Suffering* series, the PARSNIPS lecture, and more. We look forward to rescheduled and renewed Department events once we all return to campus!

We’ve been busy! Here are some highlights of our faculty’s recent work:



Dr. Craig Agule was a critic for Alex Sarch’s *Criminally Ignorant* at the American Philosophical Association’s Eastern Division meeting, where he also organized a panel discussion on Culpability and Punishment. Dr. Agule published a review of Gideon Yaffe’s *The Age of Culpability: Children and the Nature of Criminal Responsibility in Ethics*. This spring, Dr. Agule’s Reading Seminar is wrestling with Kate Manne’s *Down Girl: The Logic*

of Misogyny, and he is a faculty member with the NJ–STEP program, teaching at South Woods State Prison. Dr. Agule is one of the inaugural Fellows with the Rutgers–Camden Writing & Design Lab.

Dr. Margaret Betz volunteered at the Ask-a-Philosopher table in Philadelphia’s Suburban Station over break as part of the American Philosophical Association’s Eastern Division meeting; she looks forward to organizing an Ask-a-Philosopher table herself this summer! Dr. Betz’s article “The Spectre of Nat Turner: A Philosophical Analysis of Resistance Violence” will be published in *Social Philosophy Today* this spring.



Dr. Stuart Charmé published “Existential Psychoanalysis,” in The Sartrean Mind, a major volume on Sartre edited by Matthew Eshleman and Constance Mui, Routledge, 2020, and he published “Women at the Western Wall: The Political and Religious Struggle for Equal Rights,” in Women in Monotheistic Religions: Interpretation and New Roles, Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Center (Dubai). Dr. Charmé’s op-ed about gender norms and Halloween costumes in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has garnered a broader audience after being reposted as an example of crazy political correctness on websites like *breitbart.com*, *campusreform.org*, and *barstoolsports.com*. Dr. Charmé also continues to serve as the Director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program, overseeing its incorporation into the Department of Philosophy & Religion.



Dr. Eric Chwang has been exceptionally busy preparing for the newest member of his family, as he and his wife are expecting a baby in March! Dr.

Chwang continues his work on consent and medical ethics, between his fatherly preparations.

Daniel Dal Monte received a dissertation-completion grant from Temple University. He argues that Immanuel Kant’s transcendental idealism provides a consistent framework for a libertarian theory of freedom and that the implicit framework of contemporary libertarian theories is deficient. He was scheduled to present at Baylor University in April on the different interpretations of Kant’s views on the

nature of space and time and how they relate to the competing views of Newton and Leibniz.

Dr. Michael Gentzel published “Classical Liberalism, Discrimination, and the Problem of Autonomous Cars” in *Science and Engineering Ethics*.

Dr. Nicole Karapanagiotis got a contract for her book, Branding Bhakti, with Indiana University Press, which will hit the shelves in April 2021. She has a book review of Andrea M. Hyde and Janet D. Johnson, eds., Stories of School Yoga: Narratives from the Field, forthcoming in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. She attended the annual meeting of the American Academy of religion, serving on the steering committee for the Hinduism unit, and she presented “Packaging Hinduism for Global Consumption” at the University of Pennsylvania India Research Symposium. Dr. Karapanagiotis is teaching a re-vamped version of Introduction to Religious Studies this semester, and she continues to work with the Muslim Students Association—they’re doing cool things! And, lest it sound like all she does is work: Dr. Karapanagiotis is the newest photographer for the city of Wilmington (Newcastle County) Parks and Rec!

Austin Rooney is finishing up his dissertation, “Reasons, Causes, and Weakness of Will,” and he will soon publish a piece in an upcoming “Philosophy and Deep Space Nine” collection; the working-title of his piece is “DS9 and the Trouble with Selves.” In his teaching, he is experimenting with a “Liveblog” assignment, where students are asked to report on their notes (with time-stamps) from a class session and then provide post-hoc reflections and comments on what stood out to them from their notes. At the end of the semester his students will construct a narrative of the course-learning experience that draws directly on these primary documents, forming a portion of a semester portfolio where students reflect on what they’ve learned and whether and how they’ve changed. Meta-cognition forever!

Dr. Greg Saylor is serving as President of the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles, and he is doing a lot of public-facing work in philosophy as “the love of wisdom.” For example, he recently completed a six-week series titled “Human Being/Being Human in the Digital Age.” For more information on that work, go to <http://www.prs.org>.

Dr. Nathan C. Walker's new book, [The First Amendment and State Bans on Teachers' Religious Garb](#) (Routledge 2019), is receiving glowing reviews. Kirkus Reviews says the book is a "a masterfully meticulous treatment of the relevant law and literature, the factual context, and a concluding legal analysis... A thorough, magisterial account of a timely and historically important legal debate."

Dr. John Wall is working on a new book, to be published in 2021, on children and the vote, and he is

co-editing a book called [The Bloomsbury Handbook on Theories of Childhood Studies](#). Dr. Wall published two articles on childism and children's global citizenship. He received a grant and startup funding to create a childism institute and advised on children's rights with Amnesty International UK, Children's Voice Association (Finland), and the Ethical Practice Involving Children (EPIC) Project (Australia). He was also a supervisor on two Doctoral dissertations, one Masters thesis, and three BA theses.

We've got exciting courses on the slate for Fall 2020! Registration is currently scheduled to begin Monday, April 20.

PHILOSOPHY (730)		Instructor	Time	Gen Ed
101	Intro to Logic, Reasoning, & Persuasion	Young	T*Th 2:00–3:20	LQR
111:01	Introduction to Philosophy	Betz	MW 12:30–1:50	EAV
111:02	Introduction to Philosophy	Betz	MW 2:05–3:25	EAV
211:01	History of Philosophy I	Betz	T*Th 11:10–12:30	HAC
211:02	History of Philosophy I	Rooney	MW 12:30–1:50	HAC
222	Self and Identity	Denehy	T*Th 9:35–10:55	EAV
226	Ethics	Rooney	MW 9:35–10:55	EAV
247	Philosophy of Sex, Gender, & Sexuality	Betz	T*Th 2:00–3:20	EAV, DIV
249:90	Biomedical Ethics	Sacks	online	EAV
249:91, 92	Biomedical Ethics	Denehy	online	EAV
249:93, 94, 95	Biomedical Ethics	Gentzel	online	EAV
249:96, 97	Biomedical Ethics	Young	online	EAV
251	Ethics and Business	Sacks	online	EAV
329	Ethics and the Future of Humanity	Rooney	online	EAV
333	Evil	Wall	MW 2:05–3:25	EAV
389	Independent Study in Philosophy			
RELIGION (840)		Instructor	Time	Gen Ed
101	Introduction to Religious Studies	Karapanagiotis	T*Th 9:35–10:55	GCM
108	Intro. to Religion & Contemp. Culture	Banner	T*Th 8:00–9:20	EAV
111	Asian Religions	McCauley	W 6:00–8:50	GCM
215	Gods, Sex, & Violence in the Old Test.	Banner	online	HAC
216	African-American Religion	Ziyah	T*Th 3:35–4:55	EAV
220	Hinduism	Karapanagiotis	T*Th 11:10–12:30	GCM
235	Islam in the Modern World	Hamdeh	online	GCM
263	Religion in Contemp. America	Miller	MW 9:35–10:55	USW
278	Death & Dying in Religion	Gilmore-Clough	MW 3:45–5:05	GCM, DIV
318	Religion and Law	Walker	M 6:00–8:05	EAV
333	Evil	Wall	MW 2:05–3:25	EAV
337	Religion and Psychology	Charmé	MW 12:30–1:50	
339	Gods and Monsters	Salyer	online	
363	Magic & Ritual Power	Banner	online	HAC
389, 390	Independent Study in Religion			

To receive future newsletters, write craig.agule@rutgers.edu with the subject line "Department Newsletter."