



NEWSLETTER OF THE
**Department of
Philosophy & Religion**

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Fall 2000

Dr. Ferenc Altrichter Wins Teaching Award



The Department of Philosophy and Religion's **Dr. Ferenc Altrichter** received the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Award. His courses include Logic, Symbolic Logic, Modern Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, and Metaphysics.

In winning this award, he adds to the department's impressive teaching record in the last decade: **Dr. Shinn** (now retired) received the Student Government Association Teaching Excellence Award in 1991; **Dr. Patricia Turrisi** received the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Award in 1994 and the Board of Governors Award for

Excellence in Teaching in 1995; **Dr. Jim McGowan** received the Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Award, the Distinguished Teaching Professorship Award, and the Board of Trustees Teaching Excellence Award in 1998; and **Dr. Don Habibi** received the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Award in 1999.

Ferenc Altrichter recently went through post-tenure review and received a rating of excellent. The secret to all this excellence? According to some (anonymous) students: "He forces us to think for ourselves, whether we like it or not."

Debate on the Existence of God



Dr. Herbert Berg (P&R) and **Dr. Moorad Alexanian** (Physics) debated the existence of God on October 12, 2000. Ironically, it was the religion professor who argued against, and the science professor who argued for. The debate was sponsored by the Philosophy and

Religion Society and was attended by over 300 students.

Both professors agreed that it is impossible to prove God exists. According to Alexanian, God is *supernatural* and therefore beyond any natural proof. Nevertheless, just as birds do not need to know about aerodynamics to fly, so humans do not need to prove God's existence to believe. The spiritual dimension or soul needs and knows that God exists. Berg argued that, although philosophically it was impossible to prove or disprove the existence of a god, the god as described by Jews, Christians, or Muslims is one whose attributes are contradictory. A lively question period followed the debate in which students challenged the arguments of both professors.

Congratulations

Two of our Spring 2000 graduates, David Durham (a P&R major) and Jennifer Owen (a P&R minor), were married on August 5, 2000 in Elon, NC.





Greetings to our Alumni and Friends

Joe Wilson, Chair

P&R was honored again with a Chancellor's Teaching Excellence

Award, this year's going to **Dr. Ferenc Altrichter**. **Dr. Tom Schmid** continues a tradition of involvement by department faculty in the commemoration of the events of 1898, serving this year as co-chair of the 1898 Foundation.

Since the last newsletter two new books by P&R faculty have been published. **Dr. Carol Thysell's** *The*

Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian and **Dr. Herb Berg's** *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*.

We're delighted to have heard from more of you since the last newsletter. Keep those cards, letters, and e-mail messages coming in.

Getting to Know Us Better: Michael Schaffer

Dr. Michael J. Shaffer is the department's newest member. He joins us as a full-time lecturer and teaches Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Ethics, and Philosophy of Science. His specialities include philosophy of mind, epistemology, logic, ethics and early modern philosophy.

Michael earned his Ph.D. at the University of Miami in 2000 with his dissertation, *Idealization and*

Empirical Testing. He received his M.A. and B.A. from Northern Illinois University in his home state. Michael has taught at both of these universities and at Florida International University prior to coming to UNCW.

His research focuses on the logic of idealization and the application of "nonmonotonic logic of counterfactuals" to the foundations of probability theory, to the frame problem in artificial intelligence and



decision theory, and to theories of rationality.

Faculty News

Candace Gauthier was appointed one of twelve Fellows for 2000 Colloquium on Applied Media Ethics, sponsored by the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* and Brigham Young University. The Colloquium was held October 10-15, 2000 at Park City, Utah and she co-authored a paper on Public Relations Ethics with Kathy Fitzpatrick of the University of Florida. The paper was presented to the Colloquium and will be published in 2001 by the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*. She presented two papers in the spring semester: "Terminal Sedation and Active Voluntary Euthanasia" at the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, February, 2000; and "Unfinished Business in Bioethics: Carrying the Philosophical Insights of the Last Twenty-five Years into the New Millennium," at Bioethics: The Next Twenty-five Years at the University of

Tennessee, Knoxville, April, 2000. She also had two articles published: "The Right to Know, Press Freedom, and Public Discourse," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 14: 4 (1999); and "Television Drama and Popular Film as Medical Narrative," *Journal of American Culture*, 22: 3 (1999).

Don Habibi presented "Mixed Messages: J.S. Mill and the Problem of Authority" at the International Society for Utilitarian Studies Conference at Wake Forest University on March 26, 2000.

Jim Megivern has been involved in six different Death-Penalty presentations this semester: on September 9 he attended a three-session all-day workshop at the University of Dallas to Pax Christi Texas at their annual meeting; on October 27 he presented a paper at the NC Religious Studies Association meeting at UNC-Chapel Hill; on November 4 he gave an historical presentation for the Covington, KY, Catholic diocese; on November 8 he gave an analysis of their own

denomination's recent call for a moratorium on executions to the local clergy of the Presbyterian Church; on November 12 he gave an invited presentation on a Christian perspective on "God and the Death Penalty" (others presented on the Jewish and Muslim perspectives) at National Louis University as one part of the Chicago Humanities Festival XI; and on November 17 and 18 he was on two different panels at the "Committing to Conscience" meeting in San Francisco, ending with a protest march to San Quentin, the largest death row in the world, and spoke at the gates.

Samuel Murrell has published two articles: "Evangelical Theology in the New Millennium: The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God in Review," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*; and "Wresting the Message From the Messenger," in *African Americans and the Bible, Social-Cultural Formation and Sacred Texts* edited by Vincent Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000). He has co-edited



an anthology *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Fall 2000). And, his book, *Chanting Down Babylon* won first place in the Philadelphia Academic Bookshow.

Tom Schmid was elected co-chair of the 1898 Foundation for 2000. Since then he has been the co-recipient, with Herbert Harris, of two grants, a \$5000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Church for the development of the 1898 Foundation web site, to be located on the NCSpin server which is managed by the Division of Public Service and Extended Education at UNCW, and a \$25,000 Z. Smith Reynolds "Race will not divide us" grant for the 1898 Foundation, which will be used for 1898 activities in the areas of programs, memorial, economic inclusion, and cultural heritage. He serves as the editor for the "education" segment of the 1898 web site, and in conjunction with that developed an extensive web site called "What happened in 1898?" for use by

students in the public schools. He also attended a one week Institute for Intercultural Communication, held at Forest Grove, Oregon, July 16-23.

Alumni News

John M. Tyson '74 lives in Fayetteville, NC. He is an attorney-at-law at Tyson and Associates. His wife, Kirby, also graduated from UNCW. They have four children, the eldest of whom, Jason, graduated from UNCW in 2000, making him the third generation of Tysons to attend UNCW.

Charles Jeffery Garrison '79 recieved his Master of Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological. He is currently pastoring a Presbyterian Church in Cedar City, Utah and pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological. His dissertation is entitled, "Presbyterians and Miners: the Churches Response to the Comstock Lode." If old friends or teachers would like to be in touch, his email is cpchurch@netutah.com.

Charles E. Ponton '82 is a realtor in New Hanover County and lives in Wilmington with his wife, Wanda, who also graduated from UNCW.

Eric Tyson '88 is an Account Executive for the United Parcel Service in Raleigh.

Jason Cahill '94 lives in the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia and is general manager of an American logistics firm.

Joy Lacy Witlow '94 and her husband Brad (also a UNCW graduate) live in Rocky Mount, NC. They have three children ages 3 years, 1 year, and 10 months.

Kathy L. Alstrin '95 is the Art Directress at HAH Montessori in Wilmington, N.C. She recently had an art exhibit on campus in the University Union's Living Room. The exhibit was titled "Mandala."

Matthew Smith '98 is the Director of Youth/Young Adults at the First United Methodist Church of Belmont.

Matthew Newby '00 is a Legal Assistant for the law firm of Fried,

Alumni! We want to hear from you!

Name: _____
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 Address: _____
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 Phone: Home () _____ Work () _____ Email: _____
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 Address: _____
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 Matching Gift Company? Yes No
 Graduation Date: _____ Major: _____
 News for the next newsletter: _____

You can also update your information or send us news for our next newsletter by emailing alumnews@uncwil.edu or fill out the form at www.uncwil.edu/alumni

I want to support the UNCW Department of Philosophy & Religion

Please consider a donation in support of UNCW's P&R department. Your gift will help supply equipment for classrooms, support student services and extracurricular activities as well as provide needed scholarship support for students. Your help and generosity will allow us to continue to provide a meaningful education for Philosophy and Religion students.

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Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson in Washington, D.C.

Tammie Schwedler '00 is in Hickory, NC, attending classes at Lenoir-Rhyne College.

We know that we have missed many of you in this update. We are eager to hear about your academic and career accomplishments. After all, you are our best measure of program, and the best examples for our current students of the benefits of being a Philosophy and Religion major. So please stay in touch and keep us up to date on your lives. A lifelong relationship with our alumni is vital to the success of the department. Also, if you would like to regain contact with your fellow graduates, we would be happy to publish your email address.

Majors . . .

Many P&R majors graduated in Spring 2000: **Janice Chapman** (double major with Psychology), **Craig Cohen** (double major with

Anthropology), **Heather Doyle** (Cum Laude), **David Durham** (Magna Cum Laude), **Jenna Faircloth**, **Jonathan Garriss** (double major with English), **Stephanie Green** (Cum Laude), **Jeffery Lenz**, **Crystal Lubinsky** (double major with History), **Vear McKenzie**, **David Morris**, **Matthew Newby**, **Tammie Schwedler**, **Chandler Snyder**, **Virginia Thompson** (double major with Marketing), **Stefani Tyson** (Magna Cum Laude), **Benjamin Whitlock**, and **Angela Williams**.

The P&R Society has been quite active. In addition to organizing the debate between two faculty members on the existence of God, five of its members attended the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN. The Society is also planning more faculty debates. All P&R majors, minors, faculty, alumni, and anyone else who is interested is welcome to attend all meetings. For more information please e-mail **Luke Richey** at lmr2058@uncwil.edu.

The Web . . .

If you would like to see what a particular faculty member is up to, one of the best ways is to check out our many web pages. Most of these pages contain course, professional, and often some personal information. Of course, our email addresses can also be found there. So, please check us out at the following URLs:

<http://www.uncwil.edu/p&r> (for the department)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/bergh> (for Herb Berg)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/gauthierc> (for Candace Gauthier)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/stanley> (for Maurice Stanley)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/thysellc> (for Carol Thysell)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/turrisip> (for Patricia Turrisi)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/wilsonj> (for Joe Wilson)

<http://www.uncwil.edu/people/zervosg> (for George Zervos)

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