

# NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION

## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Philosophy and Religion Alums,

The Department of Philosophy and Religion is looking forward to another exciting and busy year at the University of Mississippi. We have scheduled a number of Philosophy Forum workshops and Religion Forum lectures, as well as our triennial William Hal Furr Dialogue on Religion. Take a few minutes to visit [phirel.olemiss.edu](http://phirel.olemiss.edu) and look over all the events that have been scheduled on the department's calendar.

I'm very pleased to announce that we have three permanent faculty members joining the department this year. Dr. Deborah Mower enters the department as an associate professor who is the inaugural recipient of the Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Hume Bryant Lectureship in Ethics Endowment. Her research interests include applied ethics, moral psychology, and virtue ethics, and she is the current President of the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum. Dr. Kristy Slominsky joins the department as an Instructional Assistant Professor of Religion.



*Dr. Deborah Mower     Dr. Kristy Slominsky*

She is an expert in the history of American religions and Christian traditions. Her current work focuses on the way in which religious leaders and organizations of the late 19th and 20th century influenced the course of American sex education. Finally, Dr. Shem Miller, who will serve our department as an Instructional Assistant Professor of Religion at the DeSoto regional campus, is an expert on Christianity and Judaism in antiquity, and he is currently working on a book that will serve as an introduction to poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We would love to hear from you, so please do not hesitate to call, email, or drop by Bryant Hall!

Sincerely,

Steven Skultety  
*Chair and Associate Professor  
Department of Philosophy and Religion*

**PHILOSOPHY**

**John Kimble**

**Tell us about yourself**

I'm an associate at the law firm BuckleySandler and a graduate of UVA Law. My wife is Lindsey, and my two kids are Pema (21 months) and Bodhi (10 months). My novel *The Merger* is available on Amazon (small plug).

**How has your philosophical training helped you in your career?**

My philosophical training not only made my career possible in the first place by helping me to obtain a high score on the LSAT and admission into a top ten law school, but it also made my transition into the actual practice of law a breeze. Thanks to the diligent efforts of the professors in the Ole Miss Philosophy Department, I understood the art AND the science of arguments. After three years, I left my initial legal job to travel the world and write my Great American Novel. I faced a lot of skepticism when I returned to the DC legal market two years later with a glaring hole in my resume, but the skills that I learned from those professors helped me to quickly move up the ladder into a better position than the one I left behind.



**What made you decide to become a philosophy major?**

I entered Ole Miss as a computer science major. Just as I was growing more and more bored with those classes, I signed up for Dr. Westmoreland's Intro to Philosophy. Halfway through the semester I changed my major. That class opened my eyes to a new world that I wanted to explore.

**Was there a particular class that you remember from your time at the University? A favorite professor? A favorite paper you wrote?**

While I had a number of great classes from all of the professors there, my favorite by far was Dr. Lawhead's two-part History of Philosophy. To this day, he's the best lecturer that I've encountered. He had a way of making the ideas of all of these dead philosophers come alive and of presenting their philosophies not as relics of the past, but as pieces to a puzzle that is still being put together.

**What advice do you have for current philosophy majors?**

My advice to philosophy majors is to ignore the skepticism from friends and family about the prospects available to a graduating philosophy major. If you want to spend your life pursuing truth, it's either philosophy or physics/mathematics. And if you want to abandon that pursuit for a lucrative, equally-fulfilling career, I'm living proof that you can.

**RELIGION**

**Thomas Chandler**

**How has your religious studies degree helped you in your career?**

My religious studies degree has helped me the most by teaching me to embrace diversity. There are so many



people in the world today who want to be closed off from any other belief system or way of life that is different from their own. I am of a completely different mindset, however. I want to learn as much as possible about people who are different from me, and my experience in the religious studies department at Ole Miss helped me understand the value in such an outlook.

**What made you decide to become a religious major?**

I am in vocational ministry, therefore I was already taking a few religious studies classes while at Ole Miss before it became an option for a major. When it was announced that students could declare it as a major, I wasted no time! I wanted to be a part of something new and exciting but also impactful for the culture at Ole Miss.

**Was there a particular class that you remember from your time at the University? A favorite professor? A favorite paper you wrote?**

My favorite memories from the program all revolve around the people. We had such great trips to places like a Hindu temple in Atlanta, a Buddhist monastery, the local mosque, etc. We also had so many great guests and speakers, from a voodoo priestess to a belly dancer to Tibetan monks. These experiences were made possible by the awesome faculty in the department. Also, there are no students on campus quite like religious studies majors. I loved making memories with people of other religious beliefs and challenging their beliefs as well as mine through study and friendly debate. The peers I met in the religious studies program were some of my greatest friends in college.

**What advice do you have for current religious studies majors?**

As far as advice goes, don't be afraid to challenge the status quo. Don't accept or conform to what you've always done. Push yourself and push others. That is the only way growth can occur: through pressure and discomfort. Keep your head up and eyes on the prize of finishing a great program of study at the greatest university, Ole Miss.

**PHILOSOPHY**

**Madison Gable**

**What made you decide to become a philosophy major? Do you think this would be a good major for other students?**

When I got to college, I realized that I was having such a hard time choosing a major, because I did not want to limit myself to one area of study before sorting out the fundamentals of life that should underlie my educational and career decisions. I saw studying philosophy as a way to continue thinking about every aspect of life while fulfilling my requirement to choose a major. It was easy to justify my choice to live the examined life, because studying philosophy is practical for any post-grad path. Philosophy is a great major for students whether they are planning to continue their education or begin a career directly after graduation. Philosophy requires intensive reading and writing and fosters analytical skills, which are essential for graduate studies or professional programs. Likewise, philosophy students are more innovative and entrepreneurial in all occupational endeavors, because reading philosophy strengthens creative thinking skills that cannot really be taught on the job.



**What are your main areas of interest in philosophy?**

My main area of interest is ethics—specifically animal rights and intergenerational justice. It is entertaining to see how brilliant philosophers and their conceptions of justice falter when they must consider intergenerational concerns.



**RELIGION**

**Keri Crum**

**What made you decide to become a religion major? Do you think this would be a good major for other students?**

I came to Ole Miss with an undeclared major, but I was on the pre-med track. However, after a semester of Biology I decided I really did not like science enough to continue on it in. I took Dr. James Bos's Abrahamic Traditions course to meet the Humanities requirement for Liberal Arts, and I fell in love with the study of religions! I loved how you could look at different religions and find so many connections. I decided that if I was going to survive the next three years at Ole Miss, I needed to pick a major that I was going to love studying and working toward. Religious Studies was that major for me. Even though the classes are difficult and require a lot of time and effort, I do not mind putting in the time and effort because I am truly interested in what I am learning. Philosophy and Religious Studies majors both teach students how to read critically and develop our own ideas and ways of thinking, which are both very important tools to have in any scholarly discipline. Therefore, if students want to go outside the box and challenge themselves in a new way, I think the Philosophy and Religion Department is a great place to do just that!



**What are your main areas of interest in religious studies?**

As I stated above, my favorite part about learning about religions is seeing how they all connect together. I love to take things that seem totally different at face value and find ways to string them together. Finding the links between different religions also means finding links between different countries, cultures, and people, which is a beautiful and very needed thing in the world today!

**What plans do you have for the future?**

Over the last three years I have grown to love Oxford and Ole Miss very much! Therefore, after I graduate I hope to work at the university as an admissions counselor for a few years. I also plan to go to Seminary to pursue a Masters Degree and eventually a PhD. I want to work as a career missionary through the International Mission Board and later teach religion at the college level.

## PHILOSOPHY

**Donovan Wishon, assistant professor of philosophy**, joined the department in Fall 2012 after earning his PhD. at Stanford University. He has research interests in contemporary philosophy of mind and language, and he is also a leading expert on the theoretical work of Bertrand Russell, the distinguished British philosopher, logician, social activist, and recipient of the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature.

An affiliated faculty member in neuroscience, Wishon argues that recent empirical work on introspective error suggests that our special access to our own conscious mental lives is fallible, imprecise, and limited in scope. In light of this, he urges that we

curb our introspection-based sense that our experiences, in all of their qualitative richness, must be something more than complex neurobiological processes. His recent publications in the history of analytic philosophy include “Russellian Acquaintance and Frege’s Puzzle” (forthcoming in the prestigious journal *Mind*), which challenges orthodox interpretations of Russell’s views about our most basic knowledge of reality and its role in our thought and talk. Wishon’s chapter “Russell on Russellian Monism” (in *Consciousness and the Physical World*, Oxford, 2015) explores Russell’s view that the traditional distinction between “mind” and “matter” is unfounded and that the subject matter of both psychology and physics concerns events in space-time that are, in themselves, neither mental nor material.

Since arriving in Oxford, Wishon has organized a number of major conferences. In Spring 2014, he ran “Conscious Thought and Thought about Consciousness” that brought leading international philosophers and cognitive scientists to UM to discuss human and animal consciousness. In Fall 2012, Wishon organized the centenary conference for Russell’s *The Problems of Philosophy*. This event resulted in a volume he co-edited (with Bernard Linsky) entitled *Acquaintance, Knowledge, and Logic* (CSLI, 2015), which was recognized with the Bertrand Russell Society’s 2016 book prize. He also planned interdisciplinary conferences on The Semantics and Ethics of Racial Language (Fall 2013) and Shakespeare and Philosophy (Spring 2016).

In the classroom, Wishon explores the ways that philosophy interacts with the sciences and other humanities while emphasizing the distinctive contribution it makes to our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. He regularly teaches undergraduate courses on Philosophy of Mind, Personal Identity and the Self, Philosophy of Language, and Existentialism and Phenomenology.



## RELIGION



**Sarah M. Moses, Assistant Professor of Religion**

(with a research specialty in Christian and comparative religious ethics) earned her PhD at Boston College in 2011. Her book *Ethics and the Elderly, The Challenge of Long-Term Care* was

published in 2015 by Orbis Books. The book provides an analysis of the social ethical challenges presented by contemporary aging, including long-term elder care and family care-giving. Based on her research, Moses presents new and innovative models of elder care which promote the dignity of older people and their ongoing participation in community. Moses also published an essay in the Spring 2015 issue of *The Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* entitled “The Ethics of ‘Recognition’: Rowan Williams’s Approach to Moral Discernment in the Christian Community.” The essay provides analysis of the Anglican ethical tradition in the context of contemporary debates regarding sexuality and same-sex marriage and contributes to scholarship on Anglican theologian Rowan Williams. Moses also co-chairs the Anglican Studies Interest Group, a scholarly association that is part of the academic organization The Society of Christian Ethics.

In the classroom, Moses regularly teaches lower-level courses such as Introduction to Religion, including Honors sections of that course. She also enjoys teaching upper-level courses such as “Religious Ethics,” “Religion, Illness, & Healing,” “Religious Perspectives on Aging and Death,” and “Feminism, Women, and Religion.” In addition, she coordinates the Community-Based Internship course which places religious studies students in structured internships and integrates academic analysis of their experience. In 2015/2016 she received a stipend from UM’s McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement in order to integrate service-learning projects into her religion courses. For instance, in her Fall 2015 course on religion and aging, students completed community-service hours at local elder-care residences and integrated their hands-on experience into their final research papers. Moses’s commitment to teaching was recognized in 2013 when the College of Liberal Arts awarded her the Cora Lee Graham Award for Outstanding Teaching of Freshman.

Moses is looking forward to teaching a new course in Fall 2016 called Medical Humanities. The course will provide students with a humanistic perspective on the practice of medicine through weekly clinical shadowing experiences at Baptist Memorial Hospital—North Mississippi (Oxford) and multi-disciplinary class readings. Moses developed the course as part of a new inter-disciplinary minor at UM called Society and Health.