



Phi Sigma Tau International Honor Society in Philosophy Newsletter



Issue #158

November, 2019

Society News

Recently, I submitted a revocation ballot for five chapters. Two chapters, those at The College of St. Rose and Wheeling Jesuit, were to be revoked because the schools had closed their philosophy majors. Three schools, Whittier College, The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Tri-College University were to be revoked because of lack of interest on the part of faculty. Most of the votes were for revocation, but one school asked that we not revoke the chapters at schools that still have majors, one thought that not enough information was provided, and another (the University of New Mexico) asked that no chapter be revoked. To explain their position, students at the University of New Mexico sent me a letter. That letter follows.

Dear Dr. Gibson,

Below is a response to the proposed charter revocations written by the active student members of the New Mexico Alpha Chapter.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.¹ If Marx were resurrected today to take a brief glance at the University's discourses transpiring in the US, he would take little comfort that the founding axiom of his historical materialism retains immense explanatory power in instances where the ruling ideology marginalizes minority epistemologies. Rather, Marx would be at pains to recognize that philosophy continues merely to explain the world at the level of really existing politics while, within its own sphere in the University, it strangles philosophy of its revolutionary power by retracting access to material resources for all those who wish to tarry with philosophical wonder outside the boundaries of what the ruling class declares is "philosophy proper." If we "philosophers," we the lovers of wisdom, if we wish to remain committed to the principle that philosophy is a predispositional proclivity of those imbued with rational faculties and an interest in the good, we must do whatever our capacity allows to refrain from placing bulwarks towards necessary material resources, resources that stand

as a basic condition of possibility for philosophizing, to those with a minimal interest in the true and good. Moreover, this maxim entails that when one witnesses a so-called philosopher on the path to thwarting others' philosophical activity, that one does not commit themselves to quietism but raises the alarm that material sophists aim to quash philosophical progress. This is precisely what we intend to do apropos the national office of Phi Sigma Tau's proposal to retract the charter of the substantial set of chapters located at Whittier College, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, The College of St. Rose, Wheeling Jesuit University, and Tri-College University. We listened to the national office's argument to limit material resources to these cells of young thinkers, and we hear a discourse of power that claims that it does not wish to be bothered by those that remain on the peripheries of philosophical existence. In response, we ask the following: ought we not assist rather than strangle those with the slightest interest in wisdom in their pursuit of it? Should we not provide the full range of resources in our reach to California Zeta, Massachusetts Zeta, New York Zeta, West Virginia Alpha, Minnesota-North Dakota Beta? In short, are we not bound to our historical philosophical position to break the chains of our fellows in the cave of shadows and lead them to the good?

Sincerely, Ian Lubkin, New Mexico Alpha President

1 Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* trans. Samuel Moore and ed. Joseph Katz, (New York: Pocket Books, 1964), 57

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Chapter Reports

AL-BETA(0102) [Auburn University; advisor, Keren Gorodeisky] The Auburn chapter held its first meeting of the year on August 23. Students met Dr. Mitchell Green of the University of Connecticut; conversation was about issues in the philosophy of language, issues such as slurs and musical expression, a special program at Connecticut for school teachers and graduate school. Some of the

chapter's students who are taking the senior seminar on Aesthetic Agency participated in the first Southern Aesthetics Workshop (August 30-31). Six pairs of students read the Workshop's six papers in advance, prepared questions about the papers, and raised the questions after each of the presentations and before the general questions and answers part. In addition, Dr. Jennifer Lockhart and chapter students are screening the films of Terrence Mallick every Thursday evening throughout the semester.

In the September 20 meeting, members chose the chapter's T-shirt to be printed out and purchased soon. Also, members decided to begin charging dues. Students chose a few possible topics for the semester's philosophy panel, an event to be held at a local café and open to all. Members will vote on the topics suggested. A date for a film night was set, but the film has not yet been selected. Finally, members decided to organize a trip to the 2020 meeting of the Eastern Division APA which will be held in Philadelphia in January.

AL-DELTA(0104) [Samford University; advisor, Dennis Samson] During the 2018-2019 school year, our chapter held a number of events. In October, we held a Majors Fair and recruited students for the philosophy department; later in October, we had a dinner; in November, we sponsored a panel discussion on The Literary and Philosophical Significance of the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins; in April, we sponsored a campus-wide lecture by Dr. Keith Putt titled "Le Dieu est Mort; vive le Dieu: Theopoetics as the Passion of Hope"; at a May dinner, we elected Parker Gilley as President, Starling Reid as Vice-President, and made plans for the next school year

At the first meeting of the new school year, members discussed the spring curriculum, recruiting more students into the department, and membership in Phi Sigma Tau. We also assigned the officers to plan a campus-wide discussion on a relevant topic.

CA-GAMMA(0503) [California State University Chico; Katia Samoilova] NEW ADVISOR. [The Chico chapter is regrouping after the massive fire last year that wiped out the nearby town of Paradise. --ed.]

CA-IOTA(0509) [Westmont College; advisor, Jim Taylor] President: Billie Bioku, Vice-president: Austin Nachbur, Secretary: Hannah Fisk (Aeva Schrambach will be Secretary during the spring term), Treasurer: Caleb Lieurance, Events Coordinator/Public Relations: Zack Mendez. Our Westmont chapter plans BBQ for September, a discussion in October, and a movie night in December. In the second semester, we plan a Thought Experiment in January, a discussion topic in February, a Logic game night in March, and a guest speaker in April.

CA-XI(0514) [CSU, Dominguez Hills; advisor, Robert Jones] NEW ADVISOR. Dr. Jones was the advisor at CSU Chico and comes to Dominguez Hills interested in reactivating the chapter.

CT-DELTA(0704) [Quinnipiac University; advisor,

Thornton Lockwood] President: Amber Kolb, Vice-president: Paige Parton, Secretary: Mary Sobran. Our goals are to plan a roundtable discussion after the Stiernotte Lecture to find out what participants learned from the lecture. Dr. Lockwood arranged for chapter members to be invited to the reception after the lecture. In addition, we planned to have group apparel made, a hike and discussion for members, and to work with the Philosophy Club to engage the student body in an event.

FL-ETA(1007) [Florida International University; advisor, Elizabeth Scarbrough] At our first meeting we noted that new officers were not elected at the end of the last school year; students are to email Dr. Nethery if they wish to run for a position. However, our main discussion was about events for the coming year. In addition to our usual discussion events, we would like to add some new events. Possibilities: A room for Haunted Roux Library, Ask-A-Philosopher Table (at 50 cents per question) with donations for charity (we could have a bowl of questions and a bowl of thought experiments if students do not have a question). Suggested charities are Women, LGBTQ, other advocacy groups, or homeless shelters. Members agreed that we want to watch more movies together as a club.

GA-GAMMA(1103) [Agnes Scott College; advisor, Jared Millson] Secretary: Connie Tran. At our last meeting, we spoke about an upcoming event with a featured philosophy speaker; we talked about how to increase attendance of first-year students and having a departmental dinner with the speaker (food to be catered from a local restaurant). The department is hosting an academic conference and recently put out a call for papers and abstracts; professors are offering students the opportunity to review abstracts, serve as commentators/Q&A facilitators, and network with speakers.

We also spoke about a visiting speaker for a Philosophy of Language class and the possibility of having her speak to a larger audience outside class--and, of course, a dinner. The department also launched recently a new AI minor; one student has already signed up, and about ten more expressed interest. The chapter also got more departmental funding and is now considering a second learning assistant. We want to hold another screening of The Good Place show around the time the new season premieres. Finally, we checked in with everybody to see that all are on track with the courses needed to complete majors. We considered a special directed senior seminar for juniors and seniors interested in graduate school, a fun 100-level course on bullshit, and a Modern Philosophy course.

ID-ALPHA(1301) [University of Idaho; advisor, Graham Hubbs] Big event! The Phi Sigma Tau chapter at the University of Idaho (one of our newer chapters) resurrected a departmental journal. The journal, The Hemlock: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy, was last published in 2014. This is volume 16 number 1. PST members did everything. They solicited papers, read the

submissions, evaluated papers, sent papers back for revisions, and then printed the journal. Papers included “Plato and Mathematics” (David Vessel, New Mexico State University), “A SYMPOSIUM CONVERSATION” (Ron Lewis, University of Southern Maine), “How is Aristotle’s Sexual Hierarchy Justified?” (Alexandra McNamee, Montana State University), “Knowing Where to Start: Seeing the Goal of the Four-Seven Debate in Choson Korea” (Rhona Flynn, University College Cork, Ireland), “The Feminine Knowledge of the Pythagorean Women” (Brent Matheny, Kenyon College), and “Essence and Ontological Dependence in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*” (Jonathan S. Coppe, Providence College). [Congratulations to a recently chartered chapter! --ed.]

IL-LAMBDA(1411) [Southern Illinois University; advisor, Kenneth Stickers] President: Melody Bohl, Vice-president: Mike Gunn, Secretary: Micah Klareich, Treasurer: Caroline Folds, EcoAdvisor: Siena. Our chapter voted to hold meetings every two weeks; meetings might include free discussions, films, philosophy hikes, and using meetings to decompress at finals time. The topics of Free Discussion at the first meeting were “Economics and Politics” and “Environmental Crisis and Capitalism.” At our October meeting, we discussed the possibility of a philosophy lounge and future speakers. Also, we discussed recruiting members, a possible Newsletter, sharing experiences, readings, and what makes a good writer in philosophy (how to make writing clear and with a good flow, etc.).

IL-TAU(1419) [DePaul University; advisor, Avery Goldman] NEW ADVISOR. Last year, our Philosophy Circle presented “Fifty Feminist States: Feminist Philosophy, Podcasting & Activism,” “The Madness of Love Mixtape by Q Brothers,” “Experiences from Philosophy Grad School,” “Sophie Fiennes’ *Perverst’s Guide to Cinema*,” and “MAP: Minorities and Philosophy.”

IN-IOTA(1507) [Indiana University Southeast; advisors, George Harvey] NEW ADVISOR.

KY-ZETA(1806) [Northern Kentucky University; advisor, Yaw A. Frimpong-Mansoh] NEW ADVISOR.

LA-GAMMA(1903) [Xavier University of New Orleans; advisor, Thora Bayer] Our chapter inducted two new members in September. Members were given a packet of information, and we discussed their interests in philosophy.

MD-ZETA(2106) [Salisbury University; advisor, Joerg Tuske] Officers: Veda Nowowieski and Kimberly Arriaga-Gonzalez.

MA-IOTA(2209) [Assumption College; advisor, Veronica Ogle] NEW ADVISOR.

MN-BETA(2402) [St. Olaf College; advisor, Michael Feurstein] NEW ADVISOR.

MT-BETA(2702) [Montana State University; advisor, Daniel Flory] NEW ADVISOR.

NY-MU(3312) [Manhattanville College; advisors,

Siobhan Nash-Marshall and Andrew Garnett] NEW ADVISORS. During the 2018-2019 school year, Manhattanville advisor, Dr. Nash-Marshall, worked with PLATO (Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization) and NHSEB (National High School Ethics Bowl) to host the first Westchester County Regional Bowl, and this has become an annual event for the department of philosophy. The Ethics Bowl brings local high-school students to Manhattanville to discuss the pressing moral issues of the day. The admissions department recognizes this as a valuable recruitment opportunity and each year provides breakfast for the participants and literature about the College. Philosophy majors and professors, along with professors from other departments, participate as judges and moderators. Fifteen teams from seven different schools participated last February. The event was planned and run the by Phi Sigma Tau officers, along with the assistance of the former chair and PST advisor, Paul Kucharski.

Last April, in association with the World Religions and Political Science departments, the Philosophy department hosted an event entitled *Living in a Post-Truth World?* The impetus for the event was the publication by current advisor, Dr. Nash-Marshall, of her book *Sins of the Fathers; Turkish Denialism and the Armenian Genocide*. The event concluded with the annual Mary T. Clarke lecture delivered by His Excellency Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Orthodox Church.

Three undergraduates and two alumni, all Phi Sigma Tau members, delivered papers at the annual meeting of the American Maritain Association in March in Philadelphia. In addition, one PST member delivered a paper at the 2019 Moravian College Undergraduate Conference on April 13 in Bethlehem, PA. Bi-monthly meetings of the philosophy club included discussions of topics such as the ethical ramifications of Colin Kaepernick’s decision to kneel during the national anthem and whether one is morally obligated to vote. Finally, Professor Yual Chiek gave a talk to the philosophy club on the importance of philosophy for one’s daily life.

NY-Alpha Alpha(3326) [SUNY Buffalo State; advisor, Jason Grinnell] In 2018-2019 our Phi Sigma Tau members held tutoring session for students in philosophy classes; approximately fifteen students received one-on-one tutoring with a chapter member. PST also held three group sessions to help PHI 101 students prepare for final exams. We held four formal PST meetings, one to organize the annual PST food drive for the campus pantry, one to review the food drive and identify opportunities for improvements in the future, and two in the spring focused on organizing tutoring sessions and ensuring each involved PST members was “on the same page” with respect to tutoring techniques, ethics, and skills.

ND-ALPHA(3501) [University of North Dakota; advisor, Jack Weinstein] NEW ADVISOR.

OR-DELTA(3804) [Western Oregon University; advisor, Ryan Hickerson] Governor and ex officio Secretary: Erik Morgan, Jr. The first part of our meeting was a discussion of the possible revocation of chapters; there was concern that there was not enough information about the revocation reasons. Then, discussion was on recruitment to the Western Oregon chapter, and several possible members are to be invited to join the chapter. Morgan will choose a reading for the next meeting from among the articles in the April issue of *Dialogue*.

PA-LAMBDA(3911) [Westminster College; advisor, Tibor Solymosi] NEW ADVISOR.

PA-XI(3914) [Bucknell University; advisor, Maria Balcells] Co-Presidents: Shishir Budha and Anna Karnes, Vice-president: Danielle Kaufman, Secretary: Paige Braun. In our August 30 meeting, we considered inducting members at the end of their sophomore year so that we would have more continuity. We also planned our Food for Thought days (the first Food for Thought event was titled "Morality and the Silicon Valley" presented by Emily Scholfield) and discussed World Philosophy Day. We will discuss possibilities of food and games for World Philosophy Day. Though we don't have dates set yet, we plan three Food for Thought events for the spring as well as a social. Pressing matters right now are 1) getting people for the Food for Thought events and 2) choosing dates and reserving rooms for the spring events. Also, we want to advertise the Philosophy Club and consider a colloquium series.

PA-TAU(3919) [University of Scranton; advisor, Andrew LaZella] NEW ADVISOR.

TN-ZETA(4306) [University of Tennessee at Martin; advisor, Matthew Braddock] Officers: Emma Fieser, John Alex Carr, Jeremy Whiteman. As a new chapter, our first meeting was a discussion of what we needed to do during the year. Among these were the preliminary report, planning an induction meeting, and submitting minutes. Our last year's induction was held in conjunction with the history honor group, and we are considering working with another group again.

TX-LAMBDA(4411) [St. Mary's University; advisor, Eric Chelstrom] President: Kacey Fujino. The first meeting of the year was held on August 30. Possible future meetings may include readings from active philosophy courses, the ethics bowl, and some philosophical literature. Themes may include ethics, African metaphysics, political philosophy, feminist philosophy, epistemology, and other supplements to classes. The chapter plans to meet five or six times during the term, and upcoming meetings may discuss the Boo Bash, planning for the upcoming undergraduate conference, and the rules for the conference. We are also considering possible fund-raising ideas to supplement the budget (much of which will go to the conference). Chapter members also plan bonding activities. Suggestions are Caffeinated Conversations at Halcyon, Candlelight on St

Mary's, Enchanted Rock, hiking, intramural sports, and a possible debate between Dr. Greenaway and Dr. Skipper. The chapter has also formed a Group Me chat with seven members currently in the group.

TX-XI(4414) [University of North Texas; advisor, David Kaplan] NEW ADVISOR.

TX-OMICRON(4415) [University of Dallas; advisor, Cynthia Nielsen] President: Mary Starnes, Vice-president: Christine Newman, Secretary: Maddie Baxstresser, Treasurer: Katie Johnson.

VA-DELTA(4704) [University of Richmond; advisor, Karin Boxer] NEW ADVISOR.

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Dialogue

Dialogue is accepting articles for the April issue. Phi Sigma Tau members, if you have been working on a paper for a senior project or for a conference, consider submitting it to our editor, Dr. Steve Barbone (sbarbone@sdsu.edu) for possible publication. Advisors, if one of your students submits an excellent paper for one of your classes, please recommend that the student submit the paper to the editor. Membership in Phi Sigma Tau is not a requirement for submitting work. Please note that in addition to the publication of articles on philosophy, *Dialogue* also publishes book reviews. In the last couple of numbers, we have had no book reviews submitted and would like to encourage students to review books for the journal; a review is an excellent way to begin publishing. In addition, the book you request from the editor is yours to keep; your only obligation is to submit your review of the book. Reviewing is an excellent way to add to your library. The list of available books is on the Books Received page of the journal, though books are sent out on a first-come, first-served basis. So, request your book as soon as possible.

Next month is the end of the term for most schools. Best wishes to all of you as you end your term. Also, please note that several chapters list one of their activities as tutoring for beginning philosophy classes; that may be an excellent service project for your chapter, and as almost any teacher will tell you, the best way to learn is to teach.

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