

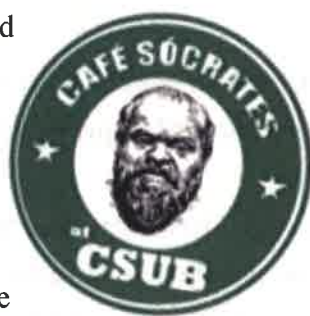
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# Philosophy & Religious Studies

Deepen the Mind; Widen the Heart

## What have we been up to?

Philosophy & Religious Studies students and faculty worked hard this semester. We successfully hosted the Central Valley Philosophy Association Conference, which included presentations from our own Dr. Kegley and Dr. Meyers. Dr. Meyers lead a Socrates Café on Ethics in the Media per the election. Six students went to Chico to compete in the regional ethics bowl. Dr. Saner has held Philosophy for Children sessions at the public library.



### Looking ahead:

Philosophy for Children at the Kern Country Library

**Beale — December 13 @ 3pm; December 20 @ 3:30 pm**  
**Southwest — TBD**

### Kegley Institute of Ethics

**April 18, 2017**

Actress, Mira Sorvino, will speak on "The Global Fight Against Human Trafficking."

### Undergraduate Conference

**Spring Semester**  
**April 22, 2017**

Be ready for the call for papers.  
Work on your submission over winter break!

## Winter Reading Groups

In the first group we will be reading Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

In the second we will be reading Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.

In the third we will be reading Charles Taylor's *Ethics of Authenticity*.

If you are interested in joining any of the groups, see our Philosophy and Religious Studies FaceBook page, and email [russellming24@gmail.com](mailto:russellming24@gmail.com).

## Philosophy for Children

The Philosophy for Children program is a new organization at CSUB, still in its beginning stages. Philosophy for children programs have been increasing in popularity over the last decade.

Dr. Saner is offering a Philosophy for Children course in the spring. Email [ssaner@csub.edu](mailto:ssaner@csub.edu) if you are interested in enrolling. The course will satisfy the new practical experience requirement.

The following is an interview with Dr. Saner about her vision for the Philosophy for Children program here at CSUB, and also about the new practical experience requirement which all new philosophy majors must fulfill.

**You've been offering the Philosophy for Children course for a few semester now, right? Can you tell me about your experience so far? Some anecdotes, perhaps?**

So, I use this story called *The Pink Refrigerator*. I have not come across it in other books for Philosophy for Children. There is a lot to be learned from people who have come before you, but it is interesting for me to see where I will want to take it here at CSUB — what will be my approach to Philosophy for Children. And *The Pink Refrigerator* seemed like a perfect story for what I want to do. I will go through it for you real quick:

There's this character, Dodsworth, and Dodsworth loved to do nothing. His motto was basically: Try to do as little as possible. He owned a little antique shop. Everyday he'd go to a junk yard, find things, clean them up, put them up for sale, and that was his work. He sold enough to get by, ate the same cheese sandwich everyday, watched TV, and would sleep on his couch. Everyday, the same thing, over and over. That was his life. One day he went to the junk yard and there was a pink refrigerator. And on it, there was this note. He didn't notice the note at first, instead he noticed the beautiful magnet — he wanted to sell it, right. He tried to take it off but the magnet wouldn't come off. So finally he noticed the note: Make pictures. He opened the refrigerator and noticed that in it were the things with which to make pictures. 'So what do you think he's going to do with them?' (I ask the children.) 'Oh! he's going to sell them.' They are very smart! So he puts them in the window for sale. A woman comes in to buy them, and he's about to sell them, but then Dodsworth says: Actually, that sketch book is not for sale, my mistake. So Dodsworth sits down that afternoon and paints a picture, of the ocean, which he hadn't seen in years. And it turns out pretty good. Then the next day the refrigerator has a new note: Read more.

And in the refrigerator is a list of the classics. So Dodsworth plans to sell them too, but instead decides to keep them and read. He reads that afternoon and all the way into the night about a ship that sailed the seven seas. Then there's another note: Play music. So he plays. Next day: Learn to cook. So he cooks. 'He was a gifted chef and he'd never even known it!' Finally, Dodsworth rode confidently to fridge, eager to see what it had to offer, he read the note: Keep exploring. He opens the fridge, nothing there. Dodsworth shouts: Hey what's going on here! That's not fair! (The kind of thing a child might say, right?) He slams the door, the note falls, the wind blows it away. Dodsworth is stunned: 'All my good fortune, just like that, gone. Just when I was getting started.' Later that night, sitting on his couch, watching his favorite TV show, he looks at the magnet. Suddenly he feels a great sense of wonder about *everything*, the world. He jumps out his chair, fills the basket on his bicycle with all the things from the refrigerator. Using the magnet, he hangs a small sign outside his door: Went to find an ocean.

## Ethics Bowl

December 3rd, the Ethics Bowl team made the trip up to Chico to compete in the California Regional. As Dr. Olson said, "No nationals this year, but we're coming back with our heads held high."

The 2016 Ethics Bowl team included: Francisco (aka Paco) Holguin, Cristal Ronquillo-Anzar, Jennifer Fair, David Baker, Stephanie Borges, and Russell Ming.

In both of my sessions I asked the students to play a game with me. I set a timer and asked: 'For one minute, I want you to do absolutely nothing.' Since, you know, it's Dodsworth's motto to do nothing or as little as possible. So I sat cross-legged, they're looking at my eyes, I'm looking at there's, and we're smirking. The little kids were super, super serious. They were like, 'I'm going to win this contest!' There were two third graders who were kind of in on the joke, you know. But they played along. And I ask after the minute was over: Ok, so who was able to do nothing? And all the little kindergarteners raised their hands, 'I did nothing! I didn't do anything!' The other third graders were like, 'Did you blink; did you breath?' And then one said, 'If you try to do nothing, then you are doing something.' And that's it! To think about the implications of states of affairs, of claims. So, if you try to do nothing, you are doing something — and it's the *attempt* to do nothing that is self-defeating, right. That was very interesting.

In the second session, the children were convinced that they'd done nothing. Now, I don't want it to come from me, I want them to move the conversation. So I lied down on the carpet and asked: Now am I still doing nothing. And they said: No! The reason was that since there was a change in state — from sitting to lying — that something had happened. That's the kind of thinking and conversation

we want the children to have. If we can, we need to stay outside as much as possible and let the children have the chance to explore those challenges. All the children said that it was good that Dodsworth met

## Dr. Steven Gamboa's going rogue...

Dr. Gamboa is going on sabbatical this spring. He will be researching theory of representation, specifically, exploring mental content as isomorphic.

the refrigerator. I asked why, to get them thinking about the reasons for their claims. Why something is good, can they actually spell it out and make it explicit both to themselves and to one another.

I think it's good to use a story to create an imaginary space, but also to use these thought-experiments and repeat these thought-experiments sometimes without using the book. For example, one time a kid said that he thought the refrigerator was a mind-controller! He didn't mean it in a bad way, yet he did have some ambivalence. He liked what the refrigerator did, you know, for

Dodsworth, but he also was a little suspicious of it

as some random source. That's the brilliance with these sessions: we need to be open, and when something like that — the fridge seen as a mind-controller — comes from the children you need to see what they mean, why they make those claims, how the others respond to those claims, what are the implications of those claims. If the refrigerator is a mind-controller, then what other things are mind-controllers? Right?

I want them to think about What do we do with our lives? and Where do we get our ideas from? and other interesting question like, If we don't have the materials to do certain things, can we do them? There is an empowerment, like for Dodsworth, in having access to those books, paints, trumpet, etc.. If you don't have access to those things, you know, then you're out of luck. It's not just a decision to paint, but you need a paint brush to do it, right. The refrigerator isn't just telling you what to do, it is giving you the resources with which to do it. We forget about that, you know, 'You just need to decide to do great things! then you'll be able to do it.' No! that's not all there is to it. And that's one reason that I really like this book.

Also, Dodsworth needed an outside source to nudge him from his daily routine. And the very premise of the story: He loved to do nothing. That's another question: what's the purpose of work? Is it for money? for self-fulfillment? Can those two go together? Also, Dodsworth learns he's a great chef and he never knew it! That's a great conversation topic that I'm sure you can talk to children about for an hour. Can you be great at something, having never done it? about the nature of talent, right? So I like this story especially because there are so many different strands and I feel like I can leave it to the kids to pick up on one of them. I don't have to highlight one or the other. The strands are there and the children are going to be curious about one of them.



**New philosophy majors have a 'practical' philosophy requirement. Could you tell me a little about it? Why it was added?**

All programs are encouraged to have these practical components, so it is in part a general university policy that there are practical elements to each major. We used to have teachers assistants (TAs), pre-law internships, and internships in the medical field with Dr. Meyers. But those were internships. Both the Ethics Bowl course and Philosophy for Children course are really hands-on experiences. You are putting philosophy into practice. Also, they in a way engage the public with philosophy. When you take either of these courses you are not just trying to intern to get some experience towards your future private goals, or furthering your career opportunities, which is ok; but in these courses you are engaging the community in something that is philosophically valuable. The second thing I'll say is that there is a push in the discipline for public philosophy. It's more and more talked about that there is some sort of social and political responsibility that these philosophers are feeling. It's being said, 'Hey philosophy is not an ivory tower. What we do and think about is relevant for the public at large, and we need to be able to speak for the public.'

I'd also like to add that I don't think philosophy is exclusively an academic discipline. I really believe that we human beings are distinguished by having this wonder about ourselves and the world and our place in it. What does it mean to be? is a human question. Philosophy should not be the

**What are some alums up to?**

**Uriah Burke (2012)**

Uriah pursued graduate studies in Toledo and transferred to SUNY Buffalo. He taught his own classes at both universities. His current work is in applied ontology, dispositions, logic, and British Empiricism.

**Mark Lamas, Jr. (2012)**

Mark earned his MA in Biblical Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in 2014 and is now working on his PhD in New Testament and Christian Origins at the University of Edinburgh.

**Ninneth Hernandez (2016)**

Ninneth is enjoying San Diego where she attends California Western School of Law. She is studying immigration law and plans to return to Bakersfield and help people.

**Magda Bogacz (2016)**

Magda is working on her Masters degree in philosophy at KU Leuven in Belgium. She is interested in philosophy of science and psychology, and philosophy of mind. She plans to continue to a PhD program.

**Brandon Hernandez (2016)**

Brandon, also in San Diego, continues to polish his Xbox skills between classes at USD School of Law. His focus is on advocacy through criminal and family law.

**Jake Lanier (2016)**

Jake is working on his Masters degree in philosophy at KU Leuven. His areas of study are intuitions and their roles in epistemology and metaphysics and the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. While not studying, he trains with the Belgium National team in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

only way to approach this question, but it should be one of the ways that is available to the public.

**Philosophy for children (one of the courses offered which satisfies the practical philosophy requirement) aim's at getting children to think critically at an early age, is that correct?**

We asked the Philosophy and Religious Studies faculty what two books they'd recommend all students read...

Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*

Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*

Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the 21st Century*

Lee Smolin's *Time Reborn*

Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Plato's *Symposium*

Rebecca Goldstein's *Plato at the Googleplex*

Jesse Prinz's *Beyond Human Nature*

Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginners Guide*

MacIntyre's *After Virtue*

Hesse's *Siddhartha*

Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*

Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*

Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*

Ferrante's *Neapolitan Novels*

Prothero's *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know — and Doesn't*

Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Buber's *Thou and I*

Nerburn's *Neither Wolf nor Dog*

'Critical thinking' is a big term these days so I guess it's cool we mention it. But what do we mean by 'critical thinking'? I think we mean giving reasons, making explicit our beliefs in the form of claims. We all have our intuitions and that's great. But if we don't make those intuitions explicit to ourselves, then we cannot judge them and ask questions about them. So when we ask the children, 'What do you think about this?' They at first have to really think, right? And then they need to understand, 'Ok, I think this is good,' or, 'I would want to be Dodsworth,' or, 'No, Dodsworth before the pink refrigerator was happier,' whatever they want to say, right? But then they need think, 'Why do I think that?' And they are thinking in an atmosphere where hopefully we can make them feel secure. There is no right or wrong answer in the sense that I am going to judge your intuition, but I am curious why you think that. If they can tell one another why they think what they think, then they can also challenge one another.

I think that's the prototype of the democratic society we want. We want people to be aware of why people hold the beliefs they do. In that sense I think it's a cool project. It's an empowering project for future citizens.