

History of The University of Waikato Department of Philosophy

The beginnings of the department and its development

The foundation Professor of Philosophy, A.J. (Jim) Baker, was appointed in 1965 and, with the arrival of Geoff Reid and Alan Olding, Philosophy was taught at the University of Waikato for the first time in 1966. In fact, 1966 was the first year of teaching at the university generally, although a few subjects had been taught in the Hamilton branch of the University of Auckland since 1960. Rudi Ziedins replaced Jim Baker as professor in 1969. By 1971 the complement of philosophy lecturers was 5 and it remained at that level until 1992 when it grew to 6 and it has remained about 6 to 7 since then. The third professor was Ben Gibbs who held the chair from 1992 to 2002. In 2001 the Religious Studies Programme joined the department, which became reflected in the new name of the department in the Calendar from 2005. By the 1990s the university practice was that a chairperson in a department need not be a professor. Since the departure of Rudi Ziedins, there have been various chairpersons and acting chairpersons: Ben Gibbs, David Lumsden, Alastair Gunn, Tracy Bowell and Douglas Pratt.

Up until 1993, all the lecturing staff were male, but the appointment of Tracy Bowell in that year was the start of the feminisation of the department which has continued so that currently four and half of the six and a half philosophy lecturing positions are held by women, an unusual statistic. Many of the staff have come from overseas, as their degrees largely make clear, with staff originating from Australia, Hong Kong, Latvia (Rudi Ziedins), South Africa, UK, USA and Yugoslavia, as well as New Zealand.

Over the years, members of the department have become known for their commitments and principles. Jim Baker, while still in Sydney, had been part of 'the Sydney Push', a group with a libertarian orientation. In the early days of the University of Waikato, he became well known for the lively expression of his ideas. Professor Ben Gibbs took public stands against two Vice-Chancellors, against one over pronunciation ('collegial' does NOT have a hard 'g', as the word derives from 'college') and against another on a graver matter, the 'Kupka affair', which concerned a neo-Nazi student at the University. Mane Hajdin spoke out against aspects of 'political correctness', and also addressed matters of pronunciation, defending in the university newsletter the use of an English pronunciation of 'Waikato'.

The Teaching Curriculum

The undergraduate curriculum has been largely typical of a department with an analytic focus, covering logic, the philosophy of science, epistemology and metaphysics, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind, ethics, and some other areas from time to time such as the philosophy of law and aesthetics. One point of difference, though, has been the early introduction by Alastair Gunn of courses in

applied ethics. The first of these was Social and Moral Philosophy, first introduced in 1976. This was followed later by Environmental Ethics, Ethics in War and Peace and Business and Professional Ethics. Liezl Van Zyl and Ruth Walker as well as Alastair currently teach in the area of ethics.

The department has, since its inception, had a special relationship with the School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences, and this has involved some joint teaching of logic and contributions to programmes such as 'Artificial Intelligence'. From this department's side Edwin Hung led that involvement, along with David Lumsden and more recently Cathy Legg, who has an IT background. The teaching of critical reasoning has been an important part of the undergraduate curriculum in recent years. This began in 1996 when Gary Kemp and Tracy Bowell trialled a course in the area in summer school. This became a regular part of the curriculum and led to their text *Bowell and Kemp 2005*, soon to have a third edition. While Gary Kemp left all too soon, we now have Justine Kingsbury who has a particular interest in that area and who shares the teaching with Tracy Bowell.

From 2000, Ruth Walker, Alastair Gunn and a computer savvy graduate student, Tery Hardwicke, started to develop the internet as a mode of delivery of courses. The department now offers a range of NET courses at levels 1 and 2. Some occurrences of these courses take place in summer school and these have proved particularly popular. Another distinctive part of the undergraduate teaching programme is a version of Social and Moral Philosophy which is offered to high school students. This was initiated, in a slightly different form, in 2000 by Alastair Gunn in conjunction with Marg Coldham-Fussell from Religious Studies and Tery Hardwicke. Students take this course not only from Hamilton but also from further afield. There is a backbone of internet provision which is supplemented by face to face teaching at a frequency depending on the size of the class and proximity.

Research

In 2006 Philosophy at Waikato scored a PBRF rating of 4.5 (on a weighted basis). Though not as stellar as some Philosophy Departments in New Zealand, this is well above average both for the faculty and the university, indeed higher than the average score of any university in New Zealand. Research areas have been various. Ethics, both applied ethics and ethical theory, has been prominent. This includes work by Alastair Gunn on environmental ethics and engineering ethics in particular, including Gunn and Vesilind 2003, and Liezl van Zyl's work including Van Zyl 2000. Mane Hajdin during his time in the department worked both on ethical theory, notably in Hajdin 1993, and on applied ethics including the topic of sexual harassment. Gary Kemp published in aesthetics as does Justine Kingsbury currently.

Philosophy of science, the area of the long serving Edwin Hung, has also been prominent, represented notably by Hung 2006. Various members of the department over the years have researched in the contemporary analytic areas of language, mind, epistemology and metaphysics. These include Rudi Ziedins, Geoff Reid, David Lumsden, Tracy Bowell, Gary Kemp, Cathy Legg and Justine Kingsbury.

There has not been a great emphasis in the department on historical figures within philosophy, but Ben Gibbs' work on Plato provides an exception. Also we might include under this heading Tracy Bowell's work on Wittgenstein and Cathy Legg's work on Charles Sanders Peirce.

Research in the philosophy of religion brings into focus elements of the Religious Studies Programme, notably the work of Douglas Pratt including papers on aspects of philosophical theology and also Pratt 2002, together with work on interfaith issues as exemplified by Pratt 2005. Ruth Walker has also published on the philosophy of religion.

The department has seen the successful completion of a diverse range of philosophy doctorates: Ron Smith, Alastair Gunn, Stephen Foulds, Rosemary de Luca, Tery Hardwicke, Mark Smith with Mashitoh Yaacob close to completion.

Moving on

After the first few years of the department, which saw the return of Jim Baker and Alan Olding to Australia, there was not a great turn-over of staff, but there have been some departures. Brian Lawrence left for the UK. Gary Kemp left to join the University of Glasgow. He has continued to publish work in the philosophy of language, twentieth century analytic philosophy and aesthetics including Kemp 2006. Mane Hajdin, who left to go to San Francisco, has continued to work in moral philosophy and teach in various institutions in the area.

Some of our students moved on to doctoral study overseas. Megan-Jane Johnstone received a doctorate from La Trobe University and is currently Professor of Nursing at RMIT University, Melbourne. Patrick Blackburn proceeded to a Masters at the University of Sussex and a doctorate at the University of Edinburgh and is currently research director at INRIA, France's national organization for research in computer science. Michael Fleming received a PhD from the University of British Columbia and now teaches philosophy at Capilano College in British Columbia. David Rodin was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University where he took a BPhil and then a DPhil and now pursues his philosophical career at Oxford University and the ANU. Lee Churchman and Stephanie Gibbons pursued doctorates at the University of Toronto and Lee currently teaches philosophy in Seoul. Andrew Jorgensen's doctorate was from Temple University and he currently holds a Post Doctoral position at Trinity College Dublin. Other students have pursued doctoral study elsewhere in New Zealand.

Lecturing staff over the life of the department

period of service

Jim Baker* BA *Sydney* BPhil *Oxford*

1965-1968

Gary Bates BA *Sydney*

1967-1968

Tracy Bowell BA(Hons) <i>Sussex</i> MPhil <i>Cambridge</i> PhD <i>Auckland</i>	1993-
Ben Gibbs * MA <i>Canterbury</i> BPhil <i>Oxford</i>	1992-2002
Alastair Gunn BA(Hons) <i>Sussex</i> DPhil <i>Waikato</i>	1969-
Mane Hajdin BA <i>Belgrade</i> PhD <i>McGill</i>	1990-1997
Edwin Hung BSc <i>Hong Kong</i> DPhil <i>Oxford</i>	1971-2006
Gary Kemp BSc(Hons) <i>Oregon</i> MA PhD <i>California</i>	1994-1997
Justine Kingsbury MA <i>VUW</i> PhD <i>Rutgers</i>	2004-
Brian Lawrence MA <i>Auckland</i> BPhil <i>Oxford</i>	1968-1978
Cathy Legg BA <i>Melbourne</i> MA <i>Monash</i> PhD <i>ANU</i>	2004-
David Lumsden BA(Hons) <i>London</i> PhD <i>Princeton</i>	1979-
Alan Olding MA <i>St Andrews</i>	1966-1968
Geoff Reid MA <i>New England</i>	1966-2004
Liezl van Zyl MA DPhil <i>Stellenbosch</i>	1998-
Ruth Walker MSocSc <i>Waikato</i> PhD <i>Auckland</i>	1999-
Rudi Ziedins * MA PhD <i>Melbourne</i>	1969-1990

From 2001 the Department has included Religious Studies:

Margaret Coldham-Fussell MA DipRelSt <i>Waikato</i>	2001-
Dennis Green MA <i>Canterbury</i> PhD <i>Waikato</i> DipJewStud <i>Oxford</i>	2001-2005
Douglas Pratt MA <i>Auckland</i> BD <i>Otago</i> LTh NZ PhD <i>St Andrews</i> BA <i>Waikato</i>	2001-

* *Professors*

References

Bowell, Tracy; Kemp, Gary. 2005. *Critical thinking: A concise guide*, 2nd Edition. London; New York: Routledge.

Gunn, Alastair S.; Vesilind, P. Aarne. 2003. *Hold paramount: The engineer's responsibility to society*. Pacific Grove, California: Thomson-Brooks/Cole.

Hajdin, Mane. 1993. *The boundaries of modern discourse*. Chicago: Loyola University Press.

Hung, Edwin H.-C. 2006. *Beyond Kuhn: Scientific explanation, theory structure, incommensurability and physical necessity*. Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate.

Kemp, Gary. 2006. *Quine: A guide for the perplexed*. London; New York: Continuum.

Pratt, Douglas. 2002. *Relational deity: Hartshorne and Macquarrie on God*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Pratt, Douglas. 2005. *The challenge of Islam: Encounters in interfaith dialogue*. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate.

Van Zyl, Liezl L. 2000. *Death and compassion: A virtue-based approach to euthanasia*. Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate.