LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Submitted by Kate Goldyn on November 23, 2021 - 10:34am

I am so happy to report that the department has reinhabited Savery Hall! After the university's fast shift to online instruction in March 2020, faculty, staff, and graduate students worked almost exclusively from home for 18 months. It was a challenging transition, especially for everyone who had to shift from in-person to online instruction with just a few days’ notice. Coming back, I believe, has been even harder. The pandemic is not over. As the delta variant ascended with the passing days of summer, our hope to return to familiar routines on campus this fall slowly receded. Everyone was eager to be back, and at the same time, apprehensive.

Department staff have worked hard, in tandem with university-level preparations, to make our environment as safe as possible. We did research to find effective air purifiers for our common spaces, and we dispersed sets of masks for all instructors to have on hand for students. Instructors dedicated themselves to offering students the flexibility they need to engage while remaining safe. This flexibility has required more work from all our instructors, and I am grateful for their efforts.

Many things have changed. We've all gotten used to wearing our masks for hours on end. Graduate students, because of their communal office space, now sign up to use an office designated as an eating space to eat, while faculty are required to eat alone in their offices. We check vaccine status for those attending our colloquium talks, and the cheese and crackers are absent from our receptions afterwards. More of us work inside our offices with the doors closed, making the physical space of the department seem at times too quiet—indeed, almost lonely.

But there are also reasons to celebrate. Faculty are thrilled to be back in the classroom with students, doing philosophy together and enjoying the wonderful interplay of ideas that a good discussion generates. We're using what we learned from teaching online to enhance our pedagogy going forward. Students have returned to the Big Table, once again puzzling through a logic proof on the black board or debating appropriate stances for pressing social issues such as income inequality, climate change, and racial justice. We have also started the search process for a new faculty member in history of philosophy and eagerly anticipate the fresh perspectives this person will bring.

Through this transition, with its stresses and extra work, my colleagues have carried on, admirably, with a wide variety of impactful research and public outreach. I invite you to learn more about what we've been up to in the newsletter below.

Please stay safe and warm in this holiday season.

All the best,
Andrea Woody
Chair, Department of Philosophy

People Involved: Andrea Woody
News Category: Announcements

Department of Philosophy · University of Washington · Savery Hall, Room 361, Box 353350 · Seattle, WA