

Faculty Focus

[September, 2019 – Dr. Aleksandar Jokic](#)

[September, 2019 – Dr. Monica Mueller](#)

[July, 2019 – Dr. Maurice Hamington](#)

[July, 2019 – Dr. Brian Elliott](#)

[December, 2018 – Dr. R. Kevin Hill](#)

[September, 2018 – Dr. Randy Spencer](#)

[July, 2018 – Dr. David Komito](#)

[June, 2018 – Dr. Brad Berman](#)

[March, 2018 – Dr. Angela Coventry](#)

[February, 2018 – Dr. Bryan Cwik](#)

February, 2018 – Dr. Bryan Cwik

The Department of Philosophy is delighted to welcome our newest tenure-line faculty member, Bryan Cwik. Dr Cwik joined Portland State in Fall 2016 after a competitive international search for a philosopher specializing in biomedical ethics. As a shared-line faculty member, he splits his teaching duties between Philosophy and University Studies.

Dr. Cwik took time to respond to some questions.

1. What is the focus of your research?

I'm very interested in moral and political philosophy, biomedical ethics, and philosophy of science. In the past I've also dabbled in environmental philosophy. The last few years I've mostly been working on biotechnology and intellectual property. I've been thinking more and more about gene editing lately, and might write more about that in the near term. Over the last year I've also been really getting into some stuff in philosophy of medicine. It would be nice if I had enough time to seriously work on that.

2. Which philosophers most influenced you?

Tough question; I'm gonna divide this into two categories, classical and contemporary. Classical, the answer is (1a) Thomas Hobbes, and (1b) Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Hobbes is the greatest philosopher to have written in the English language. He understood human nature and social life better than anyone before or since. Unfortunately he has such a bleak vision of things that he provokes a strong reaction in people and is (I think) poorly understood. But if we read Hobbes not for the prescriptions about what kind of political institutions we should have, but rather for his take on things like the role of rhetoric in democracies and the dangers that come from the natural propensity of the human mind to stray into fantasy...well, he is the best. A close second is Rousseau, but Hobbes gets first place for me because Rousseau occasionally was carried to "flights of fancy" and indulged in hyperbole. People who work on the topics I'm interested in should start their studies with a close and deep reading of Rousseau's First Discourse; so much contemporary work in philosophy on topics like biotechnology recapitulates the arguments Rousseau makes there. Hobbes and Rousseau are the best and were able to achieve what they did because they understood that the world of human affairs is messy, paradoxical, and full of contradiction. We should all take note.

Contemporary, I've been really influenced by the philosopher of biology William Wimsatt, mainly his conception of philosophical methodology and his own (idiosyncratic) version of naturalism and empiricism. But above all I've been influenced by the great philosophical bioethicists of the past 30-40 years, like Frances Kamm, Tom Beauchamp, Henry Richardson, Bonnie Steinbock, Art Caplan, and my old teacher at the University of Virginia, John Arras. For everyone who aspires to do philosophically rich applied work, they show the way.

3. What are some of the things that attracted you to Portland State University?

The students, of course. The students at Portland State are unlike the students at any of the other universities I've been a part of; I can't imagine getting in front of different kinds of classrooms after being here. Also the city and the fact that PSU is a city university. I'm a city guy, I grew up in Chicago on the NW side, college towns and suburbs kinda get on my nerves.

4. What are your favorite courses to teach?

I very much love teaching Morality and Healthcare, our "first course" in medical ethics. Medicine is the most philosophically rich and interesting part of contemporary life; I love talking about the deep questions you encounter in medical ethics with my students, its the course I look forward to the most and I genuinely have a good time in the class sessions.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Read everything you can get your hands on.

6. Favorite music?

My favorite music is music, specifically whatever I am listening to at the moment. Lately I've been listening to the new The War on Drugs record, A Deeper Understanding.

7. Favorite movie?

I like old movies – On the Waterfront, Casablanca, Lawrence of Arabia, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Elevator to the Gallows, The Third Man. Too much CGI gives me a huge headache. I'm old, I guess. It's too intense to be my "favorite" movie, but everyone should watch and deeply ponder The Lives of Others.

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

4 way tie – Lord Jim, Joseph Conrad, War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy, Histories, Herodotus, The Peloponnesian War, Thucydides (Though The Peloponnesian War may count as a "philosophical book"? Hobbes thought so...)

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

I play bass in a rock and roll band, and I'm only mildly terrible at it.

March, 2018 – Dr. Angela Coventry

The Department of Philosophy is delighted to showcase our Associate Professor, Dr. Angela Coventry. Angela received her Ph.D. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2004. Her major area of research includes Early Modern Philosophy (17th and 18th Century Continental and British).

Dr. Coventry took time to respond to some questions.

1. What is the focus of your research?

17th and 18th century European philosophy. I focus on the textual analysis of works by early modern thinkers and their contemporary relevance.

2. Which philosophers most influenced you?

Historical figures such as René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, David Hume and Simone de Beauvoir continue to inspire me the most. Each of these thinkers provide for me the absolute clarity of vision as to why the study of philosophy is important. Plus, they all wrote on a satisfyingly diverse array of topics. All of my philosophy teachers have influenced me in different ways. There are some highlights. At the University of Tasmania, Professor Frank White's teaching embodied the value of history of philosophy and Professor Jay Garfield was a model of philosophical inspiration, encouragement and precision. At UNC-Chapel Hill, Professor Simon Blackburn had this way of getting at the really fundamentally interesting issues on any topic while Professor Don Garrett made vivid the importance of attention to detail and the cultivation of

careful judgement. My peers and colleagues as well have a lot of influence but it would be far too difficult to single out any particular contributions here.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

That I get to learn, talk and write about a variety of interesting things together with a lot of people. Working at PSU is enriched by students and colleagues no doubt.

4. What are your favorite courses to teach?

The courses that invigorate me the most are Hume, Spinoza and Early Modern Philosophy. The Hume and Spinoza courses allow me to just take a few historical texts on a tremendous range of ideas and delve into them over and over again, whereas the early modern course gives me a chance to take a broader historical perspective of the ideas of many thinkers in the early modern era.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

My top 4:

1. Read widely and attentively.
2. Look up words you don't know the meaning of and use both regular and philosophy dictionaries.
3. Be open to the exploration and expansion of your mind with new thoughts, ideas and positions.
4. Memorize and practice Descartes' four rules in his 1637 work *Discourse on Method*.

6. Favorite music?

Well a lot, but my constants are All India Radio, The Church, Bjork, and Vanilla. Also, any music at all involving Siouxsie Sioux, Neil Finn, Tim Finn, and Damon Albarn.

7. Favorite movie?

Every single movie by Ingmar Bergman (these are best appreciated when viewed in the exact chronological order of production), *Blade Runner* (original director's cut) and *Harold and Maude*.

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

A lot but these classic works are the most memorable to me: Simone de Beauvoir's *She Came to Stay*, Günter Grass' *Tin Drum*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

I have a fear of public speaking.

June, 2018 – Dr. Brad Berman

Congratulations to our ancient Greek philosophy specialist Dr. Brad Berman who was promoted to Associate Professor with Indefinite Tenure this spring! We had the opportunity to interview Brad about his research and influences, in and out of the classroom.

1. What is the focus of your research?

Most of my work is on ancient Greek philosophy. I focus especially on Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, both in their classical and more contemporary contexts.

2. Which philosophers most influenced you?

Probably most significant is someone whose name I can't even recall. My first exposure to philosophy was as a high school senior. One of the English teachers had designed an elective, "Literature and Philosophy," and recruited me for its inaugural run. I was hooked immediately. Her motivation for offering the class in the first place, though, was that her daughter was doing a PhD in philosophy at Penn State. Had it not been for that then grad student, philosophy wouldn't have been on my radar in college.

As an undergrad, it was the Presocratics that then attracted me to ancient Greek philosophy. Their wonder at the world and intellectual creativity were infectious. But what really drew me in was that so much of their work seemed so profoundly bizarre. I couldn't make heads or tails of what they were up to, and yet I couldn't shake them either. Progress in understanding, to the extent I made any, was also deeply satisfying since it usually demanded that I far more carefully articulate the contours of the concepts that I was bringing to the table. I kept having the experience of moving, first, from the exciting realization that I had long strongly believed something that I had never before made explicit to myself, to next, having made it explicit, not being able to envision even a plausible alternative, to finally, coming to see that there were in fact heaps of them. It was (and remains) thoroughly mind-expanding.

As a teacher and scholar, I've been influenced most (and not just because most formatively) by my dissertation supervisors—Charles Kahn, Susan Meyer, and Karen Detlefsen. I couldn't have asked for better.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

First and foremost, the students. I've also been fortunate to have great colleagues and the latitude to teach so many different courses on topics that engage my research interests.

4. What are your favorite courses to teach?

Ancient Greek Philosophy, Plato, and the Stoics. I generally leave the classroom happier and more intellectually excited than when I had arrived, but that's especially true for these three courses.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Be an active member of the community. You can read the greatest philosophical works without ever stepping into a classroom, and there's already a wealth of excellent resources freely available online. One of the greatest things about studying philosophy in a university setting is the opportunity to explore those materials with others. Take advantage of it. Participate in class. Join a reading group, maybe even form one. Come out for philosophy club and departmental events.

6. Favorite music?

7. Favorite movie?

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

6–8: I've always been uncomfortable naming favorites in these categories. I'd generally prefer to watch or read something fresh, even if it turns out to be mediocre, than revisit something I loved the first go around, and I've just watched and read too much over the last few decades to feel at all confident about fine-grained rank-order judgments. My musical tastes don't place a similar premium on novelty, but they're pretty sensitive to my mood, social context, and the like. So in lieu of favorites, here are the last three things I've listened to (Taylor Swift's 1984 [my daughter's selection, but I'll own it], and NPR Tiny Desk sets by MILCK and by Juanes & Mon Laferte), watched (Incredibles 2, Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt season 4, and Thor: Ragnarok), and read (Saga: Volume 8, Other Minds [philosophical but in no way for work], and Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki [don't bother with this one]).

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

This is a hard one to answer. Most of what I'd be happy to widely share about myself already tends to find its way out in the classroom. But in light of that, given how often I draw on personal experiences for examples in class, maybe what would be most surprising is that I'm actually a pretty private person.

July, 2018 – Dr. David Komito

David Komito is an adjunct assistant professor at Portland State University. He teaches [Asian Philosophy](#) and Environmental Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy.

1. What is the focus of your research?

A long term theme has been peeling back the layers of Buddhist “Middle Way” Philosophy and its analysis of mind and consciousness. The more layers I’ve exposed, the more penetrating the analysis has become. It is called *middle way* because it charts a course between absolutist ways of thinking and perceiving (i.e., phenomena exist) and nihilistic ways of thinking and perceiving (i.e., phenomena do not exist). Thinking in this middle way is sort of like riding a bicycle: you are constantly wobbling between left and right as you move forward; that is how you balance. When you follow the middle way analysis you are constantly correcting your own errors of extreme thinking or perceiving to return to a balanced position.

But since I’ve begun to teach Environmental Ethics for the department I’ve also returned to considering the applications of Middle Way Philosophy to Environmentalism, a project I first took up in the 1980s, and then put on the back-burner. How did we get into this mess? How can we find our way out? Middle Way philosophy has contributions to make to both of these very pressing questions.

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

When I first read the 2nd/3rd century CE Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna I found him incomprehensible. I suppose I liked the challenge of comprehending something that seemed incomprehensible, and besides, all the great Buddhist philosophers who came after him wrote volumes explaining his philosophy, so I could not ignore my perplexity. Over the 40 plus years since that first encounter he has become a daily companion. No matter what I am thinking about, if I check in with him, I find he shows me greater clarity.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

PSU students bring so many different perspectives, life histories and interesting aspirations to my courses that correspondence with them on discussion boards can be really stimulating. Sometimes I’ll toss out a casual remark and a student will respond with a personal story which illustrates my own point. I love when that happens because it really brings Philosophy to life. I particularly remember an instance where I made a comment about non-violence and a martial arts student chimed in with a story of his encounter with a knife-toting assailant. That really got the class involved in the discussion!

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

Introduction to Asian Philosophy. The philosophers of traditional Asia had many ways of answering the big questions and I enjoy introducing students to those philosophers. In the end I think comparing Asian philosophies can actually even leave one unsure about one’s own answers to the big questions – which openness is, I think, a good thing. For example, at one time or another everyone wonders about death and most Asian philosophies propose some sort of theory of rebirth as an answer to what happens when we die. However, few modern persons (including myself) can accept such doctrines in their simplest form. So then the issue becomes whether and how such a doctrine is interpretable in the larger context of the philosophical system that proposes it. Examining those interpretations gets pretty interesting.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Trust your curiosity.

6. Favorite music?

Jazz, especially the music of folks like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Paul Desmond. For some reason which eludes me I love to cook while listening to jazz, but I like to take my meals in quiet. Fortunately my wife’s taste in music is harmonious with my own because I turn the sound system up fairly high when I am preparing meals.

7. Favorite movie?

Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Hitch once said "The city [ie, San Francisco] itself is a character" and the movie takes me back to the city of the late 50s and early 60s. As Martin Scorsese says, the story is fairly ridiculous, but it doesn't matter to me because the mood of much of the movie is so utterly otherworldly. I remember the moods Hitchcock evokes in the early part of the story from my years of living in San Francisco, and now that otherworldliness is even amplified because the city I lived in is long gone.

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

Kenneth Rexroth: *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese* has been my companion since undergraduate days. The Chinese view of the natural world was a revelation to me. In fact, Song Dynasty landscape painting was my gateway into the study of Buddhism. My life headed off in an entirely new direction after I saw Fan Kuan's painting *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams* in an Art History course at UCLA. When I first encountered them, the paintings were a vision of a world more deeply true and alive than the Los Angeles that surrounded me.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

Photography has become my greatest passion. Since moving to Santa Fe I've been on a quest to understand what is a good photograph? Every once in a while I will see one, such as Cody Brother's *Canyonlands*, but I have yet to make one. Santa Fe is a vibrant center for the exhibition of photography, and my quest keeps me engaged with the unbelievable artistic life here.

Follow [this link](#) for a video in which Dr. Komito talks about his Asian Philosophy class!

September, 2018 – Dr. Randy Spencer

1. What is the focus of your research?

My dissertation was on the American Philosopher & Educator John Dewey, his appreciation of Plato, and my own interpretation of Plato's *Republic* from a Deweyan perspective.

Since graduate school, the majority of my scholarship has been on American Pragmatism, Existentialism, Environmental Ethics and the overlaps among the three. I also teach a variety of Applied Ethics courses, such as Philosophy of Sex & Love, Philosophy of Sports, Military Ethics, and Life & Death Issues. I have not published on any of these areas, but would like to do so within the next 3–5 years.

This year I am finishing an introduction to American Philosophy for Polity Press which should be published in late 2019. It aspires to be the first comprehensive introduction to American Philosophy that presents a survey of Pragmatism within the broader context of the colonization of the Americas, the rise of U.S. hegemony, and current political, cultural, and environmental crises.

I've also spent the last 3–4 years studying Native American philosophy and am looking forward to teaching a course on Indigenous Philosophy this fall.

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

I would say it is a close tie between Plato and Dewey. I think scholars overlook the artistry and ambiguity of Plato's dialogues in favor of mining them for arguments and theory. They come alive when we read them as dramatic rehearsal where Socrates and his interlocutors are experimenting through conversation to discover the truth, rather than attempting to dispel bad arguments or defend specific positions.

Furthermore, it is important to understand how Plato was attempting to reconstruct his culture after the failure and loss of Athenian democracy and hegemony. In my dissertation, I addressed some of the parallels between the 2nd Peloponnesian War and the 2nd Iraq War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and in my opinion the United States continues to wrestle with the same dilemma between democratic ideals and military-economic power that faced ancient Athens. The historical distance

of the dialogues enables me and students to discuss these problems through a more objective lens less clouded by contemporary political discourse.

Of course, this approach to the dialogues is inspired by John Dewey who said "Nothing could be more helpful to present philosophizing than a 'Back to Plato' movement" as long as we return "to the dramatic, restless, cooperatively inquiring Plato of the *Dialogues*, trying one mode of attack after another to see what it might yield; back to the Plato whose highest flight of metaphysics always terminated with a social and practical turn" ("From Absolutism to Experimentalism," LW.5.154). While I've become a little bored with Dewey, it is because I agree with him wholeheartedly, not just on Plato, but nearly every aspect of his philosophy.

Dewey believed that experience should be the subject of philosophical inquiry and that experience is the interplay between our cultural and natural environment which continually fluctuates between stability and precariousness. Therefore, inquiry, whether academic, like philosophy, art, science, or practical, like hunting, or carpentry, attempts to identify problems in our environment and either stabilize the situation or liberate stifled potential. Thus, philosophical inquiry should be interdisciplinary and focus on ameliorating concrete problems. That is why science, education, and democracy are crucial for Dewey; because they provide the tools and resources for recognizing problems and cooperatively engaging them.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

There are so many little things I like about PSU: the way the campus is integrated into downtown, seeing Mt. Hood from the top of Parking #1, the skybridges, or the bright shade of green the leaves turn in the spring. Most of all, I like the students and faculty. They possess a deep sense of curiosity, optimism, and creativity that is contagious. I also taught here during the *Portlandia* years (2011–2018) and while the show occasionally presented unflattering caricatures of Portland, I think it more often captured the quirkiness and sincerity of the campus and the city. I will always cherish my first ten years at PSU and look forward to the next decade!

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

Existentialism (1st Place): While the subject matter can be quite dark, I find inspiration in sharing Kierkegaard, Camus, Kafka, and others with students. I like philosophers who focus on our subjective experience and personal search for meaning and identity and so do my students. I believe these topics are very relevant to them because they are in the process of becoming adults and finding/creating their authentic self. It's also nice to assign and discuss literature, instead of scholarly essays, and the existentialists not only experimented with a variety of genres, many of them are among the greatest authors of their time.

Philosophy & Literature (Runner-Up): Like existentialism, this course allows me to moonlight as a literature professor for a term. The course also allows me to share the ideas in my dissertation, so we begin by reading Plato's *Republic* as a work of dystopian literature then we read other dystopian, like Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), Orwell's *1984* (1948), and Alan Moore's graphic novel *Watchmen* (1986). I first taught the term in Winter 2018 and it has been interesting to teach the course in the wake of major "dystopic" events like Edward Snowden's leak of NSA surveillance, the rise of social media, and the increasing use of drone warfare. Given our current "interesting times", I'm eager to know how students will engage the course the next time I teach it.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Journaling: Get a nice journal and begin a new entry every time you read something new for class or your own interests. I would also incorporate lecture notes, but it might be better to use a separate notebook for those. Next find a note taking method that works for you. I prefer the Cornell Method because it allows me to capture my own thoughts and opinions in the moment while saving space to return later to add reflections and summaries. Also, give yourself permission to doodle, make lists, and paste useful photos, charts, business cards, etc. in the margins. When you finish the journal you will have a precious snapshot of who you were at the time and a valuable resource for future inspiration and research.

6. Favorite music?

I've played guitar since I was 13, so I usually prefer any music that features guitar. I was a metal head in my teens and twenties, so I still crank up Metallica, Thin Lizzy, AC/DC, or Black Sabbath when I have lots of work I need to finish. Now I'm more mellow and mostly listen to classic and progressive rock. My favorite band is Pink Floyd and my favorite song is a

tie between "Dogs" and "Echoes". During the 2017 Solar Eclipse, I played *Dark Side of the Moon* and timed it so that the final song "Eclipse" would conclude at the moment of totality. That was one of the best experiences of my life!

7. Favorite movie?

The Big Lebowski (1998): This summer I went to see the 20th Anniversary Rerelease of the film in theaters and suddenly realized it marked the halfway point in my life (I'll be 40 this year). Like *The Dude*, we are all just tumbling-tumble weeds rolling through life trying to abide with our friends, yet finding ourselves caught in the drama of others.

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy (1979): I first read this book in 3rd Grade and it blew my mind! At the time I liked the humor and sci-fi elements best, but it was also one of my earliest encounters with philosophy. Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) is a close second and I've binged the works of Philip K. Dick over the past four years. *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1975) is probably my favorite by Dick.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

It should be obvious from my previous answers that I tend to over-share and enjoy my eccentricities; therefore, I don't know if students would be surprised by anything about me!

I guess I'm proud to be a "jack-of-all-trades" by maintaining a wide range of hobbies: painting, astronomy, cycling, hiking, meditating, yoga, pen & paper RPGs (like *Dungeons & Dragons*), turn based strategy games (like *Civilization*), binge watching Netflix, guitar, etc.

December, 2018 – Dr. R. Kevin Hill

1. What is the focus of your research?

My research has mostly focused on Nietzsche – that was what I wrote my dissertation on. I have published a monograph on Nietzsche as philosopher, and an introduction to Nietzsche for the general reader. I have also done two translations of Nietzsche's writing. My monograph on Nietzsche devoted considerable attention to Kant, so I suppose that is a sizable secondary research interest.

2. What philosophy has most influenced you?

In a sense, the philosopher who influenced me the most was the late Walter Kaufmann, who not only introduced me to Nietzsche but to many other figures as well. Though I never met him, he was my philosophical mentor, and I have enjoyed friendships with many of his students. Nietzsche, of course, though my relationship with his thought is fraught and ambivalent. Kaufmann also called my attention to Plato and Wittgenstein, and as a result they have influenced me almost as much as Nietzsche.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

For me, the most important thing about teaching at Portland State is its extraordinary history (it began as an extension program for military shipyard workers, many of whom were people of color, during World War II). This connection of the institution with the global struggle against fascism, and with increasing access to higher education among working class people and people of color, is one which I find personally meaningful, and this tradition continues today in our special emphasis on first generation college attenders.

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

I probably enjoy teaching Philosophy of Law the most, because it provides me with a way of incorporating my legal training into my philosophy teaching. It is also a course which to an unusual degree emphasizes the practical and political dimensions of philosophy.

5. Favorite music?

I think it is generally known among my students that I am a fanatic utterly devoted to the work of David Bowie, and not just with regard to his music.

6. Favorite movie?

I have a hard time narrowing down the list of favorite movies to just one, but it's probably *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I am almost as devoted to all the films of Stanley Kubrick as I am to the music of David Bowie. *Barry Lyndon* is probably a close second.

7. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

My favorite novel has always been John Fowles' *The Magus*.

8. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

I think the only thing that might surprise people is to know that I was classically trained in voice as a child, and performed in two operas with the San Francisco Opera (*Der Rosenkavalier* and *Parsifal*). Classical music was the road not taken, but I have no regrets!

July, 2019 – Dr. Brian Elliott

1. What is the focus of your research?

The original focus of my philosophy research was the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. For the last decade or so, I have branched out into philosophy of the city, philosophy of art and architecture, and social and political philosophy. My latest book project is on philosophy and literature.

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

Like many, I was first drawn into philosophy by the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. My interest in Sartre eventually led me to select Heidegger as the focus of my doctoral work. More recently, the German Jewish twentieth-century thinker Walter Benjamin has been pivotal for me. In contrast to Heidegger, I love the diversity and openness of his intellectual curiosity. Benjamin spent the last fifteen years of his life in Paris and committed suicide trying to flee Nazi-occupied France in 1940.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

The intellectual humility of the students, the pedagogical commitment of my Philosophy Department colleagues, and being on an urban campus.

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

Ancient Philosophy, due to the diversity and richness of the readings, and the typical level of engagement among students in the class.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Keep your minds open to ideas and don't underestimate your capacity to think.

6. Favorite music?

I listen to a fair bit of music, but growing up in the northwest of England in the 1980s I would have to name The Smiths as a musical and poetic revelation. Morrissey's lyrics were so very cryptic, evocative, and suggestive. I am also an avid Radiohead and Thom Yorke listener.

7. Favorite movie?

In my teens and twenties, I watched a lot of art house cinema. I love the films of the Italian neorealists and beyond. *Accatonne* by Pasolini and *La Strada* by Fellini are all-time favorites. I also love the films of Ingmar Bergman, Jean-Luc Godard, Peter Greenaway, David Lynch, and Jim Jarmusch – lots of weird and artsy stuff!

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

All-time influential books for me are James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, both of which I first read in my late teens. The Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk has also been a great influence, my favorite book of his being *The Black Book*, a kind of crime mystery novel set in Istanbul in the 1980s.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

I was a Greenpeace canvasser for six months in 1990 before I started my studies in Edinburgh later that year. Thanks to that experience, I can readily empathize with people who stand on street corners or go door to door canvassing for environmental organizations. You have to be good at getting attention and not being bothered when you get ignored – great training for any teacher!

July, 2019 – Dr. Maurice Hamington

1. What is the focus of your research?

The current trajectory of my research explores both the theory and application of feminist care ethics. Care ethics is a relational approach to morality that is born of women's experience and developed in feminist thought from the 1980s to today. It has implications for epistemology, ontology, aesthetics, and of course morality. Although care theory might appear to be a very specific field, the significance stretches across many domains allowing me to address disparate subjects in my research and writing such as poetry, design thinking, posthumanism, performativity, and embodiment among others. Ultimately, I think care is undervalued and undertheorized in our world and it has the potential to positively serve human flourishing if it is taken seriously.

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

It is very difficult for me to name a single philosopher that influenced me most. I remember where I was when I read *Caring* by philosopher Nel Noddings who is the most prolific contemporary care theorist. Joan Tronto, a political philosopher has also been an important influence on me. I have had the good fortune of working with both of these scholars and I am always struck by how kind and caring they are, thus epitomizing the field they work in. In that sense, I strive to emulate their professional comportment. Jane Addams, John Dewey, Judith Butler, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are also philosophers who are important to me and my scholarship.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

I appreciate the diversity of the student body and the level of engagement and enthusiasm our students bring. I am grateful for the activism on this campus and the way students take the classroom experience and leverage it to make a positive difference in the world.

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

I love being in the classroom and I enjoy teaching ethics courses but particularly care ethics. Although I came to PSU as an administrator, I have taught in higher education for over 30 years primarily in philosophy, women's studies, and business. Often, it feels to me as if my favorite course to teach is the one that I am teaching at the time.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

First, you made a smart choice and don't let anyone tell you differently. Studying philosophy is fulfilling in so many ways as well as very important to one's development because of all the benefits of leading the examined life. My advice would be to engage deeply with the material, faculty, and your fellow students. If you put in the effort you will get a great deal out of the experience for years to come.

6. Favorite music?

I have eclectic tastes that veer toward rock. It's probably very revealing that the performer I have seen the most in concert is Weird Al Yankovich. For a while, I collected old Italian comedy songs because of my Italian heritage and the fact that they were fun. My favorite of those songs is by Lou Monte: "Mama Get The Hammer Out, There Is A Fly on Papa's Head" (1965). My daughter is a singer and she has given me an appreciation for opera and musicals.

7. Favorite movie?

Well, I am a big Star Trek nerd so I enjoy all the Star Trek movies (although I think it really flourished on TV). The 1983 film, *Valley Girl* has a special place in the heart of my partner and I because it came out the year we got married. The movie soundtrack includes what we consider to be "our song" which is "Melt With You" by the one-hit-wonder, Modern English.

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

I don't have a burning favorite as most of my reading time is taken up with philosophical works. I like Doris Kearns Goodwin's historical accounts of presidents. I also like Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*. Of course, I have read many Star Trek novels.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

I (along with my partner and dog) are ethical vegans and atheists – *that's right, we sat down with the dog and discussed it and she decided she liked the vegan food and had no need for religion in her life*. I also don't drink alcoholic beverages which is pretty weird for a philosopher.

September, 2019 – Dr. Monica Mueller

1. What is the focus of your research?

Generally, I study ethics, political philosophy, and social philosophy. My focus has shifted over the years. Currently I am researching experience, invisibility, and care. I am exploring the experience of various kinds of invisibility (personal in terms of mental and physical health symptoms, social in terms of invisibilities resulting from identities, privilege, and power), and I am thinking through how practical wisdom develops within each domain of invisible experience. I aim to explore the implications of the study with concerns for interdependence and care.

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

I have been influenced by many philosophers, both living and dead. If I had to choose one historical philosopher that influenced me the most, I'd say Hannah Arendt, which is amusing because many don't consider her to be a philosopher at all and she explicitly rejected the label. Nevertheless, Arendt's articulation of the spontaneity of action, and the life of contemplation and reflection has drastically shifted the way I think when considering ethical and political realities. Arendt recognized the way that narratives influence judgment. I think this is not simply a reflection of public judgment, but also within our own thinking horizons. She further discussed the creative potential of the human condition in a way that shapes how I relate to both theory and practice.

I have benefited from several mentors in my life and studies, and their influence is likely far greater: Tom Christenson, Lisa Tessman, Bat Ami Bar On, Patrick Byrne, Jerry Miller, Grace Clement, to name but a few.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

I appreciate the students. Most professors will say this, yet I appreciate that the demographic of students that Portland State serves is unique because many students have knowledge and experience in real life and in practical fields. The range of experience of students is vast. This lends itself to the most intriguing class discussions. Students underestimate how their experience influences their understandings. I also appreciate my colleagues both within the department and across campus. As a public urban university, this institution is significant in educating for community and I think this is vital given the problems we face locally, nationally, and globally.

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

I am not sure I can answer this question. I am privileged because I am frequently assigned new courses each year, and my favorite is that course. That may sound like a cop-out, but it is legitimate. I risked academia as a career path because I wanted to continue learning. My current position affords me that opportunity and I am grateful. Even with repeat courses I

shift readings and assignments and I re-evaluate my approach. As a reflection of that reality, I choose not to choose a favorite course.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Stay moored to the sense of wonder and resist the temptation to be cynical and apathetic. That is advice I give to myself as well. More practically, I tell students to be real with themselves about their studies and reach out for help when they get stuck or encounter obstacles. If the obstacle is self-created, just get real about it. If you don't have time because you're overextended, then be real about that and prioritize what you think takes priority in your life. If you don't have time because you would rather be studying other things and pursuing other goals, then get real about that and prioritize what matters to you. If the obstacle is because of overwhelming depressed or anxious thoughts, be real about that and ask for help. Use the resources that are available to you and advocate for your health, wellness, and best life. I warn students about getting lost in the maze of paralyzing thoughts. When that feeling of paralysis in reflection occurs, take a moment to breathe, pause, and then do the next best thing – whatever that is in the moment.

6. Favorite music?

Live music. I love listening to live music.

7. Favorite movie?

Harold and Maude

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

Seriously? I don't even know how to begin to address this question. There are too many great authors, too many fascinating genres, and too many books that have influenced my thinking over the years. Besides, I think I read everything philosophically, so I am not convinced that there are non-philosophical books.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

If there is music, I may dance. This is no statement of whether I can dance – just that I do dance, and that I love it when I've been moved to dance.

September, 2019 – Dr. Aleksandar Jokic

1. What is the focus of your research?

While I still work on issues in theoretical philosophy, in particular the metaphysics of time, since arriving at PSU in 1999 much of my research has been in practical philosophy: in normative ethics that is Kant's moral philosophy, and in applied ethics my focus has been on "international justice".

2. Which philosopher most influenced you?

Early on when studying the early days of analytical philosophy that would be the Oxford philosopher Gilbert Ryle; in moral philosophy Immanuel Kant, and in philosophy of time Arthur Prior.

3. What are some of the things that you like most about working at Portland State University?

I very much enjoy the interactions with colleagues from different departments and the curiosity students typically show about philosophy.

4. What is your favorite course to teach?

In recent years that would probably be my PHL-351U: Philosophy of Human Rights. I find that students in this course arrive with some preconditions about the concept they think they understand because they hear the term being used in the media and elsewhere almost every day, but then discover the history of the concept, attempts to formulate its more

precise definition and explore the deployment of the term in various normative contexts within the moral, legal, and political domains.

5. What advice would you give to students just beginning their study of philosophy?

Philosophy always seems difficult at first, but it is definitely worth pursuing as it will empower students with what I like to call the martial arts for the mind, which will provide them with the worthwhile skills preventing acquisition of poorly justified beliefs.

6. Favorite music?

Recently I have been mostly enjoying Italian opera.

7. Favorite movie?

Andrei Rublev, the 1966 film by Andrei Tarkovsky!

8. Favorite book (non-philosophical)?

The Bridge on the Drina by the Nobel laureate Ivo Andric.

9. What is one thing that your students might be surprised to learn about you?

Looking at an older person that I am, they probably would never guess I was a professional football (the real name of the sport known in the US as "soccer") player in the first division of the national league of Yugoslavia in the early 1980s.