

Written Report and Evaluation on:

**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference: Philosophy in a Globalized World**

Submitted as a part of the requirements for the conditions for receiving \$2,000 from the American Philosophical Association Grant Fund in November 2012.

Abstract:

This grant proposal sought funding to expand the only CUNY-wide Undergraduate Philosophy Conference to include more student papers, to create two poster presentation sessions, and to invite another keynote speaker. After organizing and hosting two successful undergraduate Philosophy Conferences, the Philosophy Area at LaGuardia Community College has generated a CUNY-wide interest in undergraduate philosophy. The conference has created an atmosphere where philosophy is accessible to all students and by making this conference intercultural, even more students will become aware of the value of philosophy. Presenters and attendees will be encouraged to learn about non-Western philosophical traditions, which have recently generated renewed interest from the wider philosophical community.

Outcomes:

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference was held on April 18 and 19, 2013 at LaGuardia Community College. Professor Jaysankar Lal Shaw, from the Victoria University at Wellington was present to give two keynote talks and to meet with students throughout the week to attend classes, the Philosophy Club, and to work with students on their presentations.

On April 18, a special event for Philosophy Majors and those interested in Philosophy was held from 3:30-5pm. The merits of Philosophy were discussed and students were able to meet all the Philosophy faculty for academic advising. Professor Shaw then gave a talk on "Human Beings and Freedom: East and West" where he touched up the differences between theories of freedom between eastern and western philosophy. Over 80 students signed in for this event.

On April 19, the actual conference was held at LaGuardia Community College. Over 200 students were in attendance throughout the day. The presentations included 5 paper presentations, 5 poster presentations, a panel presentation, and a talk by the keynote speaker, Professor Shaw. Each student who presented a paper worked with a faculty member in the Philosophy Program to improve their paper prior to the conference. At the conference, the commentator for each paper presented critiques and offered additional ideas for improvement to the students. A copy of the flier and program are included with this report.

Since its inception three years ago, the CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference has grown each year. From 4 paper presentations in 2011 to 5 plus a panel and poster presentations in 2013, the conference has continued to flourish. Each year, attendance has increased from 80 to 160 to over 200. Part of the success of this conference is that students are interested in seeing their peers present papers they have completed as part of their class work in Philosophy courses. While few of the presentations contain groundbreaking work, the opportunity to present one's work offer students a chance to receive feedback from their professors and peers in a setting that fosters growth and learning. Hearing peers present their

own work has generated an interest in taking Philosophy courses.

A part of the success is that LaGuardia Community College reaches out to all CUNY colleges and beyond to advertise. Over 20 papers and poster presentations were submitted for consideration; however the selection process narrowed down the field to the best papers and presentation proposals. Beyond this, several papers and posters accepted were not presented because of the prohibitive cost of travel and accommodation to the student. In the future, we may try to determine if travel assistance can be offered to students whose papers and posters are accepted.

Additionally, the Philosophy Program teaches over 100 sections of Philosophy Courses each semester. Through these classes, instructors are able to identify potential students whose class projects and final papers demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject matter. These students are invited to work closely with their professors to improve their work. This opportunity has been recognized by the students as a particularly enriching experience. At a community college, it is rare that students are offered one-on-one time with a professor, and even more rare that they are encouraged to showcase their work to their peers.

The rewards for the students who participate in an undergraduate Philosophy conference are undeniable. Aside from confidence and one-on-one time with professors, these students learn to accept criticism in a conference setting. Several attendees remarked to me that they were surprised that comments were both friendly and critical; they felt the criticism was harsh, but finally understood that this is how work is improved upon in a conference setting.

The development and support of an undergraduate conference is simple to do with a small budget at first; however as the conference continues, we have found that a larger conference provides more opportunities than a smaller, more selective one. Fortunately, LaGuardia Community College is supportive of the Philosophy Program and offers a small amount of funding through Academic Affairs and through Student Affairs to cover the costs of meals for the attendees and an honorarium for a keynote speaker.

As the conference grows, each year funding must be calculated carefully. If, as this year, the keynote speaker requires accommodation and will be working with students for a longer period of time, costs can increase dramatically compared to a keynote speaker from the same city who requires no more than an honorarium. We also chose to dispense with registration fees since we are trying to generate an interest in Philosophy. By charging a registration fee, even a nominal one, we are eliminating a significant number of attendees who must either choose to feed themselves, purchase a public transit card, or come to a philosophy conference. We do not try to contend with these needs, nor do we believe that we should ever charge students to attend an event that is ultimately for their own interest and benefit.

The timing of the conference is also important. By hosting it on a weekday, we were able to draw in students already on campus. We also set the presentation times according to class schedules so that a student could drop in for one hour and then leave at the end of the paper to make it to her next class. In deciding to expand the conference, we also had to choose to limit each presentation to 30 minutes each, including the commentary and questions and answers. The poster presentations were concurrent with breaks and meal times.

Finally, the support of a program such as this requires dedication from the entire Philosophy Faculty. Each year, one faculty member takes charge of developing the conference, finding funding, advertising, and

organizing. This rotating schedule allows each person to create a conference that may or may not have a particular focus and to integrate new ideas into the conference to ensure its continued success. Of course, the entire Philosophy program contributes; however, this system relieves the burden that may repeatedly fall to one faculty member and lead to burn out.

The Philosophy Program at LaGuardia Community College will continue to host this Undergraduate Conference each year, and it is our hope that since adding in poster presentations and a panel presentation, the conference will attract more students to take up the opportunity to gain experience and enlighten their peers of a particular topic in Philosophy.

Report submitted by:       Dr. Payal Doctor  
Assistant Professor of Philosophy  
CUNY- LaGuardia Community College  
6935 44th Ave. #2  
Woodside, NY 11377

3rd Annual CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference  
Friday, April 19, 2013

Conference Program

(all events take place in E-500 and E-501)

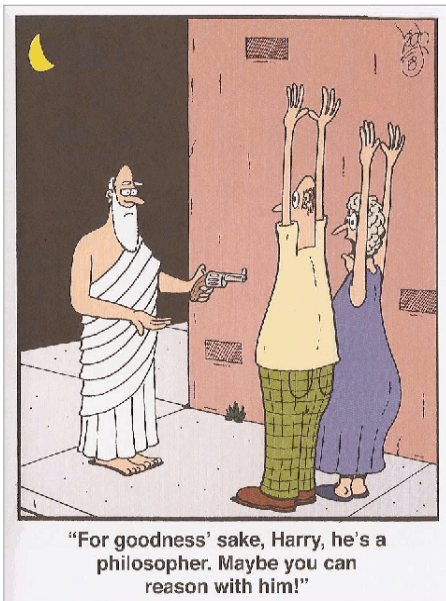
Hosted by the Philosophy Club and Philosophy Program; Co-sponsored by the Asian Heritage Committee

- 9-9:30am: Registration, breakfast, poster presentation
- 9:30-10am: Adam Shatsky, Grand Valley State University  
"Causal Theory of Reference"  
Comments by Dr. Aaron Rizzieri
- 10-10:30am: Benjamin Conover, Saint Louis University (via video)  
"The Spooky Metaphysics of Causal Powers"  
Comments by Mr. George Tsouris
- 10:30-11am: Danny Choi, LaGuardia Community College  
"Free Will Evolves in a Determined World"  
Comments by Ms. Dana Trusso
- 11am-12pm: Popular Culture and Philosophy Panel
- Bryan Parsons, LaGuardia Community College  
"Jedi Reductionism and Paleo-Compatibilism"
  - Johnny Cercado, LaGuardia Community College  
"Zombie Master"
- 12pm-1pm: Poster presentations and lunch
- 1-2pm: Professor Jaysankar Lal Shaw  
"DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY"
- 2-2:30pm: Joshua Liveris, City College (via video)  
"Emptiness in Art The Deceptively Hidden Nature of  
Lichtenstein's Kitsch"  
Comments by Mr. Ting Yih
- 2:30-3pm: Greg Smith, Sarah Lawrence College  
"The Determinist Paradox"  
Comments by Ms. Jill Schaeffer
- 3-4pm: Poster presentations and reception

Poster presentations

- Tiffany Sanchez, LaGuardia Community College  
"Social and Political Philosophy"
- Jason Cole Singletary, Valdosta State University  
"Buddhist Social Action in Burma"
- Adam Khan, LaGuardia Community College  
"Does your "self" exist? And if so, are you free?"
- Emiliya Abramova, John Jay College  
"Existentialism and the Contemporary Moral Self"
- Joseph Cutolo, LaGuardia Community College  
"On the Nature of the Self"

# 3rd Annual CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference



Special event  
for Philosophy  
majors  
and those interested in  
philosophizing.

April 18 (E 242)

3:30 – 5:00

*Human Beings and Freedom: East and West*  
Dr. Jaysankar Lal Shaw

Philosophy majors and enthusiasts are encouraged to RSVP by  
April 17<sup>th</sup> at [lagccphilosophy@gmail.com](mailto:lagccphilosophy@gmail.com)

April 19<sup>th</sup> (E 500)

## *Distinctive Features of Indian Philosophy*

Dr. Jaysankar Lal Shaw

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

9:00– 10:00	Registration, breakfast, poster presentations
10:00 – 10:30	<i>Causal Theory of Reference</i> Adam Shatsky
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Emptiness in Art: The Deceptively Hidden Nature of Lichtenstein's "Kitsch"</i> Joshua Liveris
11:00 – 12:00	Film and Philosophy Panel Bryan Parsons, Mira Vuorinen, Johnny Cercado
Noon – 1:00	Poster Presentations and Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Keynote Address Dr. Jaysankar Lal Shaw
2:00 – 2:30	<i>Freedom Determined but Still Evolving</i> Danny Choi (Free Will)
2:30 – 3:00	The Determinist Paradox Greg Smith
3:00 – 4:00	Poster Presentations and Reception

Co-Sponsored by the LaGCC Asian Heritage Celebration

