



# AAPT News

*The Newsletter of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers*

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

SUMMER 1998

## CONFERENCE UPDATE

*12th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy  
Mansfield University of Pennsylvania • July 30 August 3, 1998*

### PLENARY SESSIONS

"Erotic Pedagogy and Sexual Harassment"  
*Rosemarie Tong, Davidson College*

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
*Jim Campbell, University of Toledo*

"Philosophy Education and Adjunct Instruction"  
Viewing and discussion of Barbara Wolf's  
documentary *Degrees of Shame: Part-Time Faculty:  
Migrant Workers of the Information Economy*

### MEET THE AUTHOR SESSIONS

Rosemarie Tong, Davidson College  
Brooke Noel Moore, California State University-Chico  
Louis Pojman, West Point

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### WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTERS

*The seminar for graduate students on teaching  
philosophy is scheduled for 8:00-12:00 July 31-August 3.  
Martin Benjamin will lead the seminar.*

### Logic and Critical Thinking

"Pythagorean Derivation and Truth"  
*John White, Talladega College*

"Brainteasers Unmasked; Logic Enriched"  
*Stephen Levy, County College of Morris*

"The Critique of Poor Memory"  
*Betsy Decyk  
California State University-Long Beach*

"Informed Debates to Teach The Philosophy Text"  
*James Davis, Boston University*

"Discussion as Learning: Workshop on Skills,  
Activities, and Grading"  
*Sarah Cunningham, University of Maine-Orono*

### Film and Video in the Philosophy Classroom

"Does Personal Identity Require Total Recall?"  
*Louisa Moon, Mira Costa College*

"Framing the Questions: Creating and Using Video to  
Enhance Philosophical Education"  
*Ken Knisely, Milk Bottle Productions  
Hugh Taft Morales, Edmund Burke School*

# WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

"Using Film Vignettes in Professional Ethics Education"

*Glenn Graber and Phil Hamlin  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville*

"Time, Space, Memory and Identity: Using Film as Philosophic Text"

*Robert Timko, Mansfield University*

"Philosophy in the 'Twilight Zone'"

*Mimi Marinucci, Temple University*

"Allen's 'Crimes and Misdemeanors' in the Intro Course"

*Joseph Givvin, Mount Mercy College*

## Professional Concerns

"Neutrality vs. Openness of the Philosophy Instructor"

*Grace Clement, Salisbury State University*

"Problems in Teaching Values in the School"

*Sara Goering and Robert Figueroa  
University of Colorado-Boulder*

"Teaching and/or Research?: Balance and Integration Strategies"

*George Marshall, University of Regina*

"Building and Chairing the Teaching Department"

*Stephen Bickham, Mansfield University*

"Teaching 'Teaching Philosophy' in your Advanced Seminar"

*Stephen Esquith, Michigan State University*

"It Really, Really Works: Assessment in the Philosophy Classroom"

*Donna Engelmann, Alverno College*

## Pedagogy and Philosophy

"Writing Philosophy Gradually"

*Lanei Rodemeyer, SUNY-Stony Brook*

"The Philosophical Version of Short Attention Span Theater or How to Present 'Boring' Material in the Age of Television"

*Elizabeth Hodges, Gavilan College*

"Workshop on Improving Student Writing"

*Sam Gorovitz, Syracuse University*

"Montaigne's 'Art of Conversation' and Classroom Debates"

*Erin Livingston, Georgetown University*

"Groups for Supplementary Reading"

*Warren Kessler*

*California State University-Fresno*

"Helping Students Navigate the Text"

*James Hall, Kutztown University*

"Students in the Cave: Role Playing Plato's Analogy"

*Heather Battaly, Syracuse University*

## Using Computer Technologies

"The Fourth Tetralogy; Exploring Plato's Middle Dialogues"

*Anthony Beavers, University of Evansville*

"Spinning a Web: Developing Hypertext Materials for Philosophy Teaching-Beginning"

*Ed Teall, Mount St. Mary College  
Garth Kemmerling, Newberry College*

**AAPT NEWS is the Bulletin of  
The American Association of Philosophy Teachers.**

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**TYPESETTING AND LAYOUT  
The Philosophy Documentation Center**

**AAPT NEWS is published in the Spring, Summer, and Fall.  
Deadlines for submissions: January 1, May 1, and Sept. 1.**

# WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

"Spinning a Web: Developing Hypertext  
Materials for Philosophy Teaching-Advanced"  
*Garth Kemmerling, Newberry College*  
*Ed Teall, Mount St. Mary College*

"Interactive Translations into Propositional Logic  
Over the Web"  
*Bob Wengert*  
*University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign*

"World Philosophies On-Line"  
*Bruce Omundson, Lansing Community College*

"Internet Newsgroups in the Philosophy  
Classroom"  
*Warren Neill, State University of West Georgia*

## Ethics and Social Philosophy

"Teaching Introduction to Classical Greek Ethics  
Using the Ring of Gyges the Lydian"  
*Fred Mills, Bowie State University*

"Teaching about Systems of Values"  
*Gerald Twaddell, Thomas More College*

"Negligence: A Neglected Topic in Ethics  
Courses"  
*Gregory Weis*  
*University of South Carolina, Aiken*

"Stretching the Students' Moral Imagination"  
*Robert Figueroa*  
*University of Colorado-Boulder*

"Teaching about Race in the Academy"  
*Elliot Wreh-Wilson, Edinboro University*

"Questioning Sex Blind Theories of Human  
Nature"  
*Jeanne Wiley, College of St. Rose*

## Introductory Philosophy

"Course Mechanics for Introduction to  
Philosophy"  
*Daryl Close, Tiffin University*

"Teaching Race and Gender in the Intro Course"  
*Craig Vasey, Mary Washington College*

"Pop Media and the Traditional Intro Course"  
*James Cadello, Central Washington University*

"What Work Requires of Philosophy Courses:  
Infusing SCANS in the Philosophy Curriculum"

## Topics in Philosophy

"Rashomon Grand Jury: Voice and Epistemology"  
*John Wager, Triton College*

"Optical Allusions and More! Developing the  
Context Around Early Modern Philosophy"  
*Betsy Decyk*  
*California State University-Long Beach*

"Teaching Philosophy of Religion"  
*Louis Pojman, West Point*  
*Charles Echelberger, SUNY-Oswego*  
*Kai Nielsen*

"Kant's Model for Reflective Thinking in the  
Classroom"  
*Sarah Cunningham, University of Maine-Orono*

## Issues of Diversity

"Problems in Teaching Toleration: Diversity and  
Moral Education"  
*Sara Goering, University of Colorado-Boulder*

"Examining Other Societies in Pursuit of Social  
Justice"  
*Jon Torgerson, Drake University*

"Teaching African Philosophy in Intro Courses"

## PHILOSOPHY TEACHING EXCHANGE

*A regular feature of AAPT News sharing course materials and classroom experiences.*

*Replies to the editors or the author are welcome*

### Personal Narrative in Philosophical Writing Assignments: Engaging with Descartes' *Meditations*

Laura Duhan Kaplan

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Narrative scholarship deliberately showcases the voice of its narrator, in order to comment on the conditions under which theories are formed, and offer examples of experiences that illuminate the theories. Different commentators have also referred to it as "self inclusive scholarship," "autobiographical scholarship," or "embodied scholarship." Recently, narrative scholarship has been claiming a significant place in the academy for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it is linked with debates in the humanities and social sciences about the politics of ethnic identity, the social construction of the self, and the influence of one's social location on one's knowledge. Practically, narrative scholarship is acknowledged as an effective technique for building intellectual bridges between academics and others. For example, the personal essay is making a comeback in the world of social, political, and literary magazines as a way of introducing generally educated readers to academic ideas through concrete applications. And narrative writing is used by some as a teaching tool that invites students to catalog and reflect on their engagement with their studies.

Although narrative scholarship by no means represents main stream trends in philosophy, a number of widely read contemporary books and articles fall within the genre. Many of these works rely on *both* their content and their style to make clear their authors' approaches to theory. For example, in *The Claim of Reason* and *A Pitch of Philosophy*, Stanley Cavell moves freely between anecdotes and theories, offering each as an exploration of the others, in order to illustrate his view that learning a language involves moving back and forth between the known and the unknown. In "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling and Loving Perception," Maria Lugones speaks of her experiences as a daughter and an ethnic minority in order to invite others to travel into her phenomenological world. In *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Patricia Williams speaks of herself alternately as a marginalized Black and an included intellectual in order to bring together two alienated understandings of the concept of "rights."

Narrative scholarship should not appear new to philosophers, as some of the most central figures in our western canon make use of the genre. Plato, for example, allowed his

characters to speak personally of the ways their life experience reinforced or questioned theories, as Socrates does as he nears death in the *Phaedo* or as Alcibiades does as he confesses his unrequited love for Socrates in the Symposium. In fact, narrative scholarship has long been an accepted method for introducing new students to philosophy. Note that some of the favorite teaching texts in Introduction to Philosophy are written in a narrative style: Plato's *Apology*, Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and, with the increasing commitment of faculty to address contemporary issues from multicultural perspectives, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Recently I undertook to teach an Introduction to Philosophy course that used *only* narrative texts and included a narrative component in *every* assignment except the original research paper. My goals in emphasizing narrative philosophy were twofold: (1) to stimulate engagement with the texts; and (2) to elicit sophisticated philosophical reflection on philosophical issues as they arise in everyday practice. Every assigned reading, which included the three listed above and eight essays by friends and colleagues of mine, told a personal story about the author's exploration of a theoretical question through lived experience. Every reading response assignment combined analysis of the author's ideas with a request for a practical experience that illustrated a particular relevant point. The assigned readings served as models for the students' own writings. (I should note that self disclosure was never required, as assignments gave students the option of reporting on someone else's experience in lieu of their own.)

As an example of the interaction between narrative writing and philosophical theorizing, I offer the results of a mid-semester writing assignment on Descartes' *Meditations*. Typically, I find teaching the *Meditations* both rewarding and challenging: rewarding because my students always enjoy reading the text; challenging because they often find it rather contrived and unbelievable. But in the narrative course, by the time students encountered the *Meditations* and the accompanying writing assignment, they were convinced that even a contrived account is rooted in a practical search for an answer. They were practiced

at empathizing with a narrator, in the sense of finding a familiar experience that raises similar philosophical questions. Once they had related the theory to a familiar experience, they were then able to question, extend, and propose alternatives to the theory. In trying to explain this intellectual practice, I am reminded of Gabriel Marcel's image of philosophy as "walking around inside a metaphor." In this case, the relevant experience is the metaphor for a theory. The students walk around inside that metaphor, and bring what they learn back out to bear on the theory.

Here is the writing assignment, to be completed by students before the text is discussed in class:

1. In "Meditation One," Descartes says he will doubt the principles on which all of his knowledge rests. In that "Meditation," what principles does he doubt? Make a list.
2. In "Meditation Two," Descartes finally reassures himself that he exists. At first reading, this may seem implausible. Try to find a situation you or others have experienced that makes Descartes' doubt and his solution seem plausible. In what situation might you (a) lose confidence in all the principles Descartes doubts and (b) be reassured by the knowledge that you can at least be sure you know you exist? Describe such a situation.

Before I present the students' answers to question (2), I should comment that they are students at a mid-level state university, taking the course because it fulfills a general education goal. In my judgment, only one of the students whose work is featured below would be an "A" student in a traditionally taught philosophy course stressing the mastery of abstract concepts and argumentation. Yet all of the answers below suggest not only that students were able to take both Descartes' doubt and his resolution of it seriously, but that they were able to explore, extend, or even critique Descartes in sophisticated original ways.

First, I offer a rather straightforward answer to the question, very moving emotionally, but offering little critique or extension of Descartes' doubt. The student describes a relevant life experience, demonstrating her thought that Descartes' doubt is no mere academic exercise, and that his desire for certainty characterizes at least some of life's difficult moments.

My stepfather's best friend committed suicide many years ago and I know he has had many doubts and questions. This death caused him to question if there really was a God. If there was then how could he let his friend take his own life. It also had him questioning if you really do have a mind. If so then how could his friend rationalize in his head that things would be better if he killed himself. My stepfather's other big question was if he had a soul, how could he end his own life and not consider his friends' and family's feelings. No matter how bad things were, could he not feel the love that everyone had for him by their touch, actions, or the words he heard come from them? So as you can see, my stepfather was very doubtful of most things at this point. The only thing he did know was that he exists because he was feeling so much pain and had so much anger inside. And that his friend did not exist anymore because he was dead.

Second, I offer an example that begins to link Descartes' doubt with some of **the epistemological issues he explores about the roles** of the mind and the senses. What underwrites or guarantees epistemological certainty? This student suggests that the reliability of the senses is guaranteed by a world view or value system. If we place ourselves and our capacities at the center of the world, then whatever we hear or see will be reliable.

A similar situation to Rene Descartes' "Meditation II" happened when I was in seventh or eighth grade. I had an English teacher who was always looking for problems to solve that would make us use our thinking abilities to every extent. One example she gave was the common mystery of whether or not a tree that falls in the woods makes any kind of noise if no one is around to hear it. The first obvious answer was, of course it does because we can all see a tree fall and hear the noise it makes, so why would it be any different if no one were around? Well, then we started to think, maybe it does not make a sound. I guess we could have done like Descartes and analyzed the situation with all of the senses, but to eighth graders it would seem a little silly. I guess in the end, you could say that if we thought we were "real" and were the ones who could hear the sound, then of course the sound is always "real" and hearable, whether anyone is there to hear it or not.

Third, I offer an example that anticipates Descartes' ontological and cosmological proofs of God's existence in the Third Meditation. Here the student suggests that certainty of God's existence provides a foundation for knowledge of both self and others. The religious language the student uses is one at which many philosophy professors groan, believing it represents a student's inability to take a critical distance from her or his background. Yet I read the student's work more generously, believing her to be using familiar religious language in order to enter an unfamiliar philosophical text. Yes, she says, I doubted too, became aware of the limited capacities of human beings, and decided to shift my life to pursue a more reliable foundation.

#### **Submissions to AAPT News**

Submissions on disk or as e-trail binary attachments are much appreciated. Most major PC word processor file formats are fine although formatting is best preserved in Microsoft Word for Windows 6.0 or greater, Microsoft Word for Macintosh 6.0, and WordPerfect 5.1 or greater: We prefer MS DOS, but both DOS and Macintosh diskette formats can be read. If you submit a file on a Mac diskette, be sure to save your file in text (ASCII) format just in case we can't read your word processor's file format (e.g., MacWrite II). Please include a paper copy of your submission.

Files may be sent as e-mail from virtually any e-mail system to [dclose@compuserve.com](mailto:dclose@compuserve.com) or by FAX to 419-447-9605. If you need help, call us at 800-968-6446 ext. 34411 (**Tiffin University**) or 419-772-2197 (Ohio Northern University) -

The editors

Before I became saved, I doubted that there was a God, who made us and our surroundings. Sometimes I would think too hard, and wonder where did we come from, how we were made, and what our purpose was on this earth. I believed then that I solely controlled everything within and around me, that there wasn't really a God.

Then I realized man didn't make everything surrounding me: earth, sky, moon, stars, etc. When I started going to church, I learned about the Bible. I learned about the Almighty God. Through reading the Bible, many of the doubts I had were being answered. Through God's word I learned many things that man couldn't explain. The Lord is my sole provider for everything. He made me and my surroundings. After accepting the Lord as my Savior, He made me see things from a different perspective (his ways). He made me realize that I am real, put here for a reason to do unto him. Whether today, tomorrow, or a year from now, the Lord always answers my questions-prayers. Why I believe there is God, and that I am real, is for the simple fact that God has given me the guidance and blessings through his word to live each day of my life.

Fourth, I offer an example that hints at the social nature of self and certainty, a dimension not explicitly explored by Descartes. This student, caught behind a language barrier, feels that his true self is trapped, unable to show itself because it lacks the linguistic tools. While Descartes finds certainty by examining his own mind, this student does not, having come to doubt his own intellectual abilities because, as a foreigner, his mind cannot easily absorb knowledge, find expression, or connect with other minds. He needs the reliable foundation of intersubjectivity, of "pick[ing] up on . . . what the actual conversation is about."

Descartes give an example about wax from a candle. He explains that although the candle goes through a lot of metamorphosis it still has the same basic buildup. Descartes wonders what he is because he knows he is real but what if his life is like that candle where it changes forms. All he knows is that he thinks with his mind. I think the situation I am experiencing is my stay here in the United States. I feel like I am something that is having an out of body experience because although I live here I cannot function like an American because I do not know the language. People speak to me and they think I know everything that they are saying but I really can pick up on about a third of what the actual conversation is about. I feel like I am in somebody else's body. I know I exist when I talk to other Koreans here in the United States because they are going through the same things that I am experiencing. So that is how I know I exist here in the United States. If I did not have this luxury I would probably, that is mentally, cease to exist.

These excerpts from one particular student assignment show that, through the assignments at least, my goals in emphasizing personal narrative were met. Students certainly engaged with Descartes' doubt with a passion I had not previously seen, and their engagement stimulated sophisticated philosophical reflection. This reflection was, for the most part, not expressed in theoretical jargon, but in the language of everyday life.

My most difficult hurdle in creating a coherent "narrative" introductory course is to learn how to respond to the very rich variety of responses students offer in writing. How do I offer ample opportunities for students to share their insights with other students, if they so desire? How do I at the same time recognize that these insights may be so deeply rooted in the personal that students are hesitant to discuss them in class? How do I take the time to allow classroom discussion to develop fully the ideas offered by students and still succeed in offering the quantity of reading assignments my colleagues expect from a semester course? On the one hand, I have happened upon a technique that teaches the importance of philosophical questions to everyday life, and encourages the depth of reflection that can and perhaps ought to accompany many of life's important decisions. On the other hand, a great deal more work and study remains before I can boast that I have molded this technique into a coherent course.

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### NEW TEACHING JOURNAL ANNOUNCED

*Teaching Business Ethics* is a new journal (1997) devoted exclusively to teachers and researchers concerned with issues of teaching business ethics. The journal is published quarterly by Kluwer Academic Publishers at the individual rate of \$50.00. Request a sample copy by phone (617-871-6600) or e-mail (kluwer@wkap.com).

The Editors welcome "articles, discussion notes and letters describing and/or recommending particular approaches, practices, curricula designs and evaluation procedures written in a language generally familiar to teachers. Reports of comparisons among students with diverse backgrounds, in diverse disciplines and cultures, have special relevance for this journal." Submissions may be sent to Teaching Business Ethics, 101 Philip Drive, Assinippi Park, Norwell, MA 02061.

# CONFERENCE DAILY SCHEDULE

## JULY 30

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Registration in Doane Center  
 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. Dinner (North Manser Dining)  
 6:15- 8:15 p.m. Film (Allen Hall Auditorium)  
 8:30 - 10:30 p.m. MU Philosophy Dept. Cash Bar Reception  
 (Mark's Brother's Restaurant)

9:45- 10:15 a.m. 10:15 - 11:45 a.m. 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. 1:10 - 2:40 p.m. 2:40 - 4:40 p.m. 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. 6:15 - 8:15 p.m.

Coffee Break  
**Workshops Session IV** (Elliott Hall)  
 Brunch (North Manner Dining)  
**Workshops Session V** (Elliott Hall)  
 Time Off to Explore  
 Dinner (North Manner Dining)  
 Film or Concert  
 (Allen Hall Auditorium)

## JULY 31-AUGUST 3

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Graduate Student Seminar on Teaching Philosophy  
 (North Hall Community Room)

## AUGUST 2

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.  
 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 8:40 - 10:10 a.m.  
 10:10 - 10:30 a.m.  
 10:40 - 11:50 a.m.

Late Registration in Elliott Hall 102  
 Continental Breakfast  
 (North Manser Dining)  
 Book Display (Elliott Hall 102)  
 Workshops Session VI (Elliott Hall)  
 Coffee Break  
**Plenary Session:**  
**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**  
 Jim Campbell, University of Toledo  
 Brunch (North Manner Dining)  
**Workshops Session VII**  
 (Elliott Hall)  
 Break  
**Workshops Session VIII**  
 (Elliott Hall)  
 AAPT Cookout/Ice Cream Social  
 (South Hall Mall)  
 Film (Allen Hall Auditorium)

## JULY 31

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration in Doane Center  
 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast (North Manser Dining)  
 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Book Display (Elliott Hall 102)  
 8:40 - 10:10 a.m. Workshops Session I (Elliott Hall)  
 10:10 - 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break  
 10:30 - 10:40 a.m. Welcome by Dr. John Halstead  
 President Mansfield University  
 (Allen Hall Auditorium)  
 10:40 - 11:50 a.m. Plenary Session: "Erotic Pedagogy and Sexual Harassment" Rosemarie Tong,  
 Davidson College (Allen Hall Auditorium)  
 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Lunch (North Manner Dining)  
 1:20 - 2:50 p.m. Workshops Session II (Elliott Hall)  
 2:50 - 3:15 p.m. Break  
 3:15 - 4:45 p.m. **Workshops Session III** (Elliott Hall)  
 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. Dinner (North Manner Dining)  
 6:15-8:15p.m. Film (Allen Hall Auditorium)  
 8:30 - 10:00 p.m. AAPT Wine and Cheese Reception  
 (North Manner Dining)

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
 1:20 - 2:50 p.m.

2:50 - 3:15 p.m.  
 3:15 - 4:45 p.m.

5:00 - 6:45 p.m.

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

## AUGUST 3

7:30 - 8:30 a.m.  
 8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Breakfast (North Manser Dining)  
**Plenary Session:**  
 "Degrees of Shame: Part-Time Faculty: Migrant Workers of the Information Economy" Panel Discussion led by Betsy Decyk and Arnold Wilson  
 Checkout (Doane Center Conference Room)  
 Workshops Session IX (Elliott Hall)  
 Lunch (North Manner Dining)

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

10:20 - 11:50 a.m. I  
 1:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

## AUGUST 1

9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Late Registration in Elliott Hall 102  
 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast (North Manner Dining)  
 8:30 a.m - 4:00 p.m. Book Display (Elliott Hall 102)  
 8:45 - 9:45 a.m. AAPT Business Meeting  
 (Allen Hall Auditorium)

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## *Calendar of Events*

**July 30-August 3, 1998** --- 12th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Mansfield, PA. Sponsored by AAPT. *For more* information, see this issue or visit the AAPT Web site at:

**<http://www.mnsfld.edu/depts/philosop/aapt.html>**

**August 10-16, 1998** - Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, MA. Theme: Paideia: Philosophy Educating Humanity. Papers due Sept. 1, 1997. For more information, visit the Congress Web site at:

**<http://web.bu.edu/WCP>**

**December '27-30, 1998** -- American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Eastern Div., Washington Hilton, Washington, DC.

**March 31-April 3, 1999** --- American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Pacific Div., Claremont Hotel, Berkeley, CA.

**May 5-8, 1999** - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Central Div., Hyatt Regency, New Orleans, LA.

These listings are drawn in part from Nancy Simco (ed.),  
*The Philosophical Calendar*,  
published by The Conference of Philosophical Societies

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PHILOSOPHY  
DOCUMENTATION  
CENTER

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