

Philosophy department enhances careers

This week on Segue on WSIE-FM 88.7, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean Dr. Greg Budzban hosts Dr. Judy Crane, chair of SIUE's Department of Philosophy, to discuss the department's additions to the program and some of its upcoming events.

Entering the discussion, Crane explains her unusual journey into philosophy. She began her academic career at a small liberal arts school in New England. However, after a year and a half, she dropped out of school and moved to New Orleans. After a few years of enjoying life and working at a pastry shop, Crane enrolled at the University of New Orleans (UNO), where she took her first philosophy course.

Crane says that when she began with an introductory course, she almost immediately realized that was what she wanted to study. Crane's next course was in ethics, which almost led her to law school, though she ultimately decided to pursue philosophy as a career.

Following her time at UNO, Crane was accepted at Tulane University, also in New Orleans. Of her Tulane experience, Crane says "I got my

PhD at Tulane, where I got very interested in the history of philosophy. I just love the 17th century philosophers Descartes, Spinoza and Locke.

"I became interested in issues about language, and the relationship between language and the world, and how we categorize things. That got me interested in biological species, because we do a lot of categorizing there, and what are we doing when we do that?"

After completing her doctorate, Crane discovered SIUE was looking for a modernist, her field of study, to add to the philosophy department. She interviewed for the position. Describing the campus and atmosphere, Crane immediately felt comfortable. The SIUE atmosphere was reminiscent of UNO.

Crane has been teaching at SIUE since 1999 and became department chair in 2012. When discussing the philosophy department's future, Crane says the department has put forward paperwork to add a specialization in law, as well as an interdisciplinary minor in science, technology and medicine studies.

Discussing the law specialization, Crane explains, "Philosophy

is great preparation for law school, and many students seem not to realize that. So, by actually designing coursework for students that will help them get into law schools, we can actually better serve many students.

"We have several required courses. There's a philosophy of law course, an ethics course that's required, and some courses in social and political philosophy. Philosophy, in general, trains students quite well to think as a lawyer, and that's why so many philosophy majors are successful. If you look at some of the numbers on LSAT scores and acceptance rates, philosophy majors are near the top. So, we want to get that message across: here's a path that you can take, a philosophy major that's geared toward that career path."

Additionally, Crane says reading philosophical material helps to prepare students to read legal texts. While explaining an interdisciplinary minor, Crane says the program takes the tools of philosophy, history, and sociology, and applies them to

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science and the practice of science.

Elaborating on the minor, Crane adds, "For example, we have a course on the philosophy of science.



Crane

It examines how science operates in terms of how do you actually get to what we call scientific knowledge – what are the reasoning tools that get you there, and what justifies our scientific methods.

"There's also a course on the history of science, which looks at the long view and how we got to be what we are now. There's also a sociology of medicine course, which looks at the way medicine operates in a sociological context, and how it relates to society. It's stepping back from the practice of science, and looks at how science operates and the history of science.

"We also have a philosophy of technology course. It examines things such as what is technology, and the relationship between technology and the rest of humanity, and how it impacts our lives."

Addressing philosophical issues surrounding science, the minor will ask pertinent questions regarding what is science at all. Karl Popper formulated the question, now known as the demarcation question. It focuses on falsifiability – the ability to show that something can be proven false through experimentation or observation.

To expand on this idea, Crane references Popper's example of astrology, which Popper believed was not scientific, because it cannot be falsifiable. That is, if a prediction made using astrology did not come to fruition, the astrologer who made that prediction could justify it not happening due to some other circumstance.

The High School National Ethics Bowl is an upcoming event in which the philosophy department will be participating. Now in its third year, the Ethics Bowl will host 10 teams from seven high schools, mostly from the region. The winning team will move on to the nationals hosted at the Parr Center for Ethics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. An all-day event on Saturday, Jan. 28, the regional competition begins at 8 a.m.

The students will be faced with eth-

ical dilemmas and will have to argue about the cases they receive. Some of the questions will be given to the students beforehand. However, other questions – written by the faculty – will not, forcing the students to think critically and reason on their feet.

Crane says the Ethics Bowl is similar to a debate with the main difference being that the opposing teams do not have to disagree with one another. Instead, the students are judged by their logic, ability to articulate their points and their civility. The judges will consist of faculty from both SIUE and nearby universities, as well as some graduate students.

SIUE's philosophy department also hosts the annual Fritz Marti lecture on Friday, March 24, featuring Boston College's Dr. Richard Kearney, who specializes in the philosophy of religion. He has previously worked with Paul Ricoeur, another distinguished philosopher.

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By Miles Davis, SIUE College of Arts and Sciences