

# HMU: Dialogues

Harrison Middleton University

5/18/2016

Volume 3, Edition 1

## Letter from the Editor:

There are many benefits of one to one discussion. Yet, both students and staff also enjoy group discussion and group interaction. For this reason, Harrison Middleton University continues to offer its Quarterly Discussion program (see page 6). In addition, faculty and staff invite students to attend local events or conferences. It was wonderful to see doctoral candidate Peter Ponzio at *Great Books Chicago 2016* (page 7). Many smaller, local events also offer great opportunities for connection and community-building. As we discovered at *Great Books Chicago 2016*, group participation is exciting and infectious. What a pleasure to meet open-minded folks and engage in discussions of utopia and dystopia. And

truly, what a pleasure to enjoy the sights and sounds, music and museums of Chicago (pages 3 and 7).

We applaud those efforts at not only building resumes, but enhancing the Great Books community. We realize that everyone's success makes us all successful.

If you have questions or comments, you can reach me at [asimon@hmu.edu](mailto:asimon@hmu.edu).

Thanks! *Alissa*



"The pleasures arising from thinking and learning will make us think and learn all the more." ~ Aristotle, *Ethics*

## Reviews and More:

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Thanks to HMU Tutor, **Philip Stewart**, for the following book review.

Orwell, George. 1984. Signet Classics. 1950.

*1984* - with its setting nearly as far in our past as it was in the author's future, this book has remarkable staying power. Most students in the United States had to read this sometime in high school English. This is likely to be the work that gives us both "Orwellian" as an adjective as well as the watchword for modern reality TV – "Big Brother," always watching. Approaching its 70<sup>th</sup> year, *1984* seems to be a part of the background of the Western Anglophone narrative.

Yet, like many things in the background, it can fade from public awareness. *1984* speaks today as much as it ever has.

(continued on page 4)

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## *Presentation and Publication Highlights:*

~ **Peter Ponzio**, HMU doctoral candidate, presented a talk on Shakespeare in order to kick off the First Folio events at the Fremont Public Library in Lake County, IL. This presentation took place on February 2, 2016. **Peter Ponzio** also attended *Great Books Chicago 2016*.

~ HMU doctoral student **Thomas Wells** presented a paper at the International Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Thought, held at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas on April 7 through the 9th, 2016. The title of the paper was "Christian Conscience and Human Actions".

## *Sister Cities International:*

The mission of Sister Cities International is to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation — one individual, one community at a time. Harrison Middleton University has been a corporate supporter of Sister Cities International and a lifetime member of Tempe Sister Cities. Harrison Middleton University supports Tempe Sister Cities by sponsoring international delegates from Timbuktu, Mali and Zhenjiang, China, hosting monthly board meetings, youth group meetings, student selection interviews, and educator exchange interviews.

Most recently, Harrison Middleton University sponsored Tempe Sister Cities in efforts to twin with Agra City, India. Agra is a city on the banks of the river Yamuna in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is 128 miles south of the national capital New Delhi. With a population of 1,686,993 (2013 est.), it is one of the most populous cities in Uttar Pradesh and the 19th most populous in India. It is a major tourist destination because of its many splendid Mughal-era buildings, most notably the Tāj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpūr Sikrī, all three of which are United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites. Agra is included on the Golden Triangle tourist circuit, along with Delhi and Jaipur.

Tempe Sister Cities sent a delegation to Agra City in February to research and recommend if Tempe should seek a sister cities relationship. The delegation included Richard Neuheisel, Jane Neuheisel, Olivia Valdez, Dennis Ederer, Lori Birdsell, David Birdsell, Debbie Duncan, Raveen Arora, Clara Arora, Milt Laflen, and Michael Curd. The delegation was very well received by municipal leaders, community leaders, the education community and the medical community. The delegation visited several educational institutions including Agra College, an all girls university prep secondary school, and an engineering technical college. The delegation toured a state of the art cancer research facility. In addition they were hosted by the leaders of the Sikh temple. The delegation was treated to several banquets in which members of the business community and medical community were present. *(continued on page 3)*

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Agra City became Tempe's eleventh sister city February 22, 2016. This twinning marks the first trilateral relationship in Tempe Sister Cities history in that Agra City is also sister cities with Cusco, Peru.

Michael Curd, Vice President and Director of Education, Harrison Middleton University, was appointed coordinator for the Tempe Sister Cities Agra City program. As coordinator, Michael would like to explore educator and practical and professional exchange opportunities with Agra City. Harrison Middleton University is proud of its relationship with Tempe Sister Cities and Sister Cities International.

## Staff Highlights:



~ **Philip Stewart** presented at the 2016 Southeast Regional conference of the Evangelical Theological Society. His paper was titled, "Eschatological Verification as a Response to the Problem of Evil". He also presented at the 2016 Southeast Regional Conference of the Evangelical Philosophical Society a paper titled "Skeptical Theism and Telic Recasting". The conferences were held jointly at Columbia International University, Columbia SC, on March 18 and 19, 2016.

~ **Deborah Deacon** presented a paper titled, "Painting Conflict: Women Artists' Commentary on the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan" at the Southwest Popular Culture Association in Albuquerque, NM on February 10-13, 2016. In addition, she participated as a roundtable discussant for the panel on *American Popular Culture in the Age of Perpetual War*. **Deborah Deacon** also attended the 96<sup>th</sup> annual conference for the American Association of Community Colleges in Chicago from April 9-12, 2016.

~ **David Curd, Rebecca Fisher, and Lauren Guthrie** attended the 90th Annual Conference of the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) in Washington, DC.

~ Most of the Harrison Middleton University faculty and staff attended *Great Books Chicago 2016* to discuss utopias and dystopias.

~ **Sue Durkin, Andy Tafoya and Mary Krigbaum** attended the Great Books San Francisco weekend event at Asilomar in April 2016.

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"Beauty in things exists in the mind which contemplates them." ~ David Hume

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## *Reviews (continued):*

Winston, the protagonist, has come from a life of quiet desperation. His job is, quite literally, pointless – rewriting history in newspaper and print, history that has already been rewritten repeatedly, and may not even refer to real people any more at all. In fact, Winston may even be re-writing his own fictions again and again.

Julia, his true love, is marvelously uninterested in the things that excite Winston – such as a photograph that proves the Party is lying about history. She is shaped by the media, the manners of thought, the world around her. Get what you can and get by, but you'll never change the system.

These two partner in an unlikely, quiet rebellion. Julia does it for love of Winston, and Winston, well, because he just can't take it anymore. In the beginning, his rebellion consists of simply carving out time and space for himself, keeping a journal of seditious thoughts.

Past generations may have read *1984* as a warning about totalitarian states. This is undoubtedly an aspect of Orwell's writing, a desire to show what happens when a power-mad system betrays his beloved socialism. Others have correctly pointed out that it shows the danger of any unthinking adherence to an ideology, that the manipulation possible with any all-encompassing system can turn into something like Big Brother and Ingsoc.

Each generation has evidenced a new reading from among *1984*'s themes. The Stasi in the DDR, the NSA affairs in recent years – both have taken a page from the playbook of the "Thought Police." Social media and the ubiquitous "selfie" (along with the prevalence of camera-capable smartphones) have become the new telescreens; who would do without them, and yet who is safe from them?

*1984* is more than a cautionary tale that we routinely fail to heed, though. It is also deeply about who we are as people, and as members of a society where "groupthink" is the order of the day. There is no hero who arises to save Winston. No phoenix rises from the ashes, for there is no way to burn down the establishment. Winston's hope in the proletariat is in vain – in fact, the very source of his hope, a manifesto ostensibly written by "Goldstein", is revealed as a product of the Party, a sort of better mousetrap to catch those who might hope to change things.

Winston's quiet desperation and his uncomfortable dissatisfaction compete with his desire to hang on to even his misery, to continue existing simply because the alternative is worse.

Winston, who is just clever enough to be dissatisfied and just cautious enough that his own dissatisfaction frightens him, turns out to be just dim enough to rebel right along the path set out for him. It all begins with a journal, beautiful cream-white pages, a place for private thoughts.

*(continued on page 5)*

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This is a spectacular find – and upon his arrest, we discover that the very shopkeeper that he bought it from is an agent of the thought police. Winston’s rebellion, his expression of individuality and uniqueness, is nothing more than falling right into the honey-trap set for the cautious social changer. He’s not a true revolutionary, not really – he wants things to be better, to be sure, but only with reasonable risk, and while staying safe himself.

Winston (and Julia) run right into the arms of O’Brien, who first seems to support their resistance, and later turns out to be the very one to torture and eventually break Winston in the name of the Party. Winston quite simply never had a chance. Every turn away from the carefully-constructed society runs down pre-designed channels, and eventually, into the sand. Winston may be shooting for the moon, but it is not the stars that he lands among, but rather the cold emptiness of space.

This, then, is the tale that *1984* has to tell in 2016. Reading the novel as a caution against totalitarian government remains helpful – just not at the expense of the caution against all-encompassing ideologies, even those we’ve built for ourselves. Few members of the more recent generations will not recognize themselves, or someone they know, in Winston’s futility, Julia’s ambivalence, or the uselessness of their attempts to effect change.

It can be read as the tale of a man who hates the society he has helped to build, a man whose desire for comfort and a better life make him hedge his bets and simply “feel” that he is different, and a man who, ultimately, is driven back to the society that shaped him.

Winston is put through a lot of torture before he will change his views on reality. This extreme conditioning, though, is merely to help him learn the right way to think – a school of hard knocks, if you will. Winston loses his humanity not because he is torn apart physically, but because he loses his identity. He ultimately compromises his deepest conviction, and betrays Julia, the woman he refused to betray even for the resistance. He abandoned his love, his passion, just to be allowed once again to get by.

But it all turns out right in the end. There’s (yet) another drink, there’s a healthy fear of standing out and having the wrong opinions, and there’s the comfort of knowing that even if you betray what you love, you’ve been betrayed as well.

What’s one person going to do about it, anyway? For at the end, it’s nothing but what we have made – and we really, truly do love it.

“If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself.”

~ George Orwell, *1984*

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## *Meet an Outstanding Graduate:* **Congratulations to Outstanding Student: Gary Waters**

Gary Waters is recognized by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) as Harrison Middleton University's 2016 Outstanding Graduate. For his capstone project, Gary wrote and illustrated a book in verse which catalogs a boy's attempt to become a gentleman. The book, titled *Gentlemen Speakeasy*, reveals that the nature of a gentleman is found in mutually beneficial dialogue, with great philosophers such as Socrates, Thomas Aquinas, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche. Gary graduated with a 4.0 grade point average and immediately registered his bachelor's degree with his employer, opening the door to future advancement into a position which requires a bachelor's degree. He uses the reading, writing, critical thinking, and discussion skills that he developed in Harrison Middleton University's curriculum on a daily basis when communicating with staff and the public.

Since his graduation, Gary has traveled to Haiti to build shelters for the homeless, published his capstone project as a book (*Gentlemen Speakeasy*), and made many friends and acquaintances with whom he has discussed the ideas and philosophies he explored during his Harrison Middleton University Great Books coursework.

### *July Quarterly Discussion:*



For HMU's July Quarterly discussion we will read a selection of Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*. We have space available on Thursday, July 14 or Saturday, July 16, 2016. If you miss this opportunity for group discussion, our next Quarterly Discussion will be held in October 2016. Look for more information via email in the fall.

For more information on Quarterly Discussions, please contact Alissa Simon at [asimon@hmu.edu](mailto:asimon@hmu.edu).



Gary Waters, Harrison Middleton University's  
2016 Outstanding Graduate, recognized by  
DEAC.

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## *Harrison Middleton University Updates Mission Statement:*

Harrison Middleton University is a great ideas, great works, great conversations, distance learning university that offers undergraduate and graduate education in the humanities with concentrations in imaginative literature, natural science, philosophy and religion, and social science. Harrison Middleton University promotes student-faculty scholarship through research, discussion, and the development of collaborative publications.

A group of smiling faces on break from discussion at *Great Books Chicago 2016*. From left to right: Mary Krigbaum, Andy Tafoya, Art Ben, James Aguilar, Michael Curd.  
Photo Credit: Rebecca Fisher

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”  
~ John Dewey

## *Great Books Chicago 2016:*

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It is always nice to discuss some of these great texts in person. This year, the Harrison Middleton University faculty and staff journeyed to Chicago for a weekend of discussion and sight-seeing. Chicago did not disappoint. HMU’s very own Gary Schoepfel organized the event and readings with help from the Great Books Foundation. We discussed Orwell’s *1984* as well as works by Ursula LeGuin, Dostoevsky, and Margaret Atwood. In addition to our discussions, the group travelled to the Symphony, the Driehaus Museum and a river cruise. Many thanks to the Great Books Foundation and Gary Schoepfel for all the hard work in hosting this event.

In addition to those pictured, the following faculty and staff also attended: Christina Aguilar, Anita Cohen, Jeff Cohen, Marcus Conley, David Curd, Deborah Deacon, Sue Durkin, Rebecca Fisher, Lauren Guthrie, Margaret Metcalf, Ron Sanderson, Sarah Schelstrate, Gary Schoepfel, Alissa Simon, Philip Stewart

For information on *Great Books Chicago 2017*, visit:  
<http://www.greatbooks.org/outreach/great-books-chicago/>

