

## APAG 2018 Minutes - BC Philosophy Articulation Annual Meeting

Friday, May 25, 2018, 1 – 4 pm

Host: Karen Shirley, Camosun College

Guest Speaker: Cindy Holder

Attending: Karen Shirley, Camosun C; Anna Tikina, BCCAT rep; Lyle Crawford, Alexander C; Michael Bourke, BCIT; Reuben Gabriel, C New Caledonia; Vance Mattson, C Rockies; Selman Halabi, Columbia C; Alex Boston, Langara C; Leslie Burkholder, UBC – Vancouver; Sylvia Berryman, UBC – Vancouver; Bruce Hiebert, U Canada West; Carolyn Swanson, Vancouver Island U; Sandy Bannikoff, Camosun C; Cindy Holder, U Victoria; Frank, Camosun C.

Regrets: Alisa Webb, System Liaison, U Fraser Valley; Keith Preston, Coquitlam C; Christina Harris, Northern Lights C; Jeff Lawrence, North Island C; Jonathan Vanderhoek, Selkirk C; Grant Havers, Trinity Western U; Giovanni Grandi, UBC – Okanagan; Eike-Henner Kluge, U Vic; Wayne Henry, U Fraser Valley; Andrew Sewell, Pearson C.

Carolyn Swanson moves to approve 2018 Agenda. Approved by acclamation.

Reuben Gabriel moves to approve May 17, 2017 Minutes. Approved by acclamation.

Alex Boston volunteers (or is volunteered) both to host May 24, 2019 meeting (at Langara C in Vancouver) and to take minutes – Alex apologizes in advance for bad minute note-taking. Alex decides to dispense with last names.

### **Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:**

- a) Discussion of Freedom of Expression deferred to future meetings. (No Grant or Wayne, so no point at this meeting)
- b) Discussion of Pushing Andrew Weaver to encourage philosophy courses for International Students – Reuben mentioned that no effort was made to contact Mr. Weaver in this regard. Reuben restated the point he made last year that philosophy has made a marked contribution in the development of thought, ideas, and ideals and must hence be encouraged in higher education. International students have very limited exposure to philosophy in the countries from which they emerge, and because many of them will eventually hope to become Canadians, an effort must be made to encourage them to study philosophy when they enroll at our colleges and universities.
- c) Discussion of K-12 Philosophy: A draft was made for a Philosophy Grade 12 class, perhaps something that Philosophy Majors could teach. Part of the idea of BCCAT to introduce Philosophy to K-12 (already posted grades 11 and 12 ideas for 2020 on their website).

Perhaps could be a component of an existing course, such as Social Studies. Lyle noted that if this proceeds as it has in Ontario, it might be more a component of Intellectual History.

Cindy suggested that we look more closely at how high school curriculums work, how schools organize and deliver courses, and what would make students think of philosophy.

Sylvia noted that some schools already have philosophy courses, and this could be a useful path to philosophy at colleges and universities. Also, some post-secondary institutions (Camosun, SFU, Vancouver Island U, for example) let grade 11/12 students take philosophy (and of course other) courses, although few take advantage of this.

It was suggested that we find a High School Instructor, or a Ministry of Education Rep, to be a guest speaker at a future meeting. [Spoiler alert: For the May 24, 2019 meeting guest spot I instead went with Christina Hendricks to talk about Open Education Materials - Alex].

- d) The BCCAT Website was mentioned, and Anna noted that each committee (including ours) has a section there, where the minutes are posted. There is also a new service called Moodle for hosting committee material. It was suggested that among other things (e.g., institutional reports, details of interest, etc.) we could put up a list of sessional faculty (and those that are otherwise looking for work) that departments could access when in need of hires, emergency or otherwise. Vance is going to look at the feasibility of using Moodle.

### **Purpose of Meeting:**

It was noted that we don't do as much articulating in the meeting, but have a chance to meet, build trust, establish lines of communications, and discuss commonalities in courses. Cindy notes that students move a lot and have other things going on in their lives, so picking up a few courses at one institution and then another, is useful. This is easier to do with 100 and 200 level courses than 300 and 400 level courses. She suggested we talk about common challenges that our student run into, work to remove barriers, and make their paths easier to navigate.

Sylvia noted that 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year class (300, 400 level) articulations from a college to UBC are often not permanent ones (so that class A from a college may be allowed to match course B at UBC once, but this does not set a precedent for future instances of class A from that college matching course B at UBC) and this resistance can come from UBC itself, with the exception of college courses that are doing something that UBC is not covering (in which case course C could well count as a generic 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year philosophy course at UBC).

Cindy reiterated that we should give students more information on what transfers and what doesn't so that they can make more informed choices. She affirmed that when it comes to deciding whether course A at one institution matches course B at another, it is better to decide once and set a precedent that people can refer to than to decide anew with every query about course A and course B, or with each change of staff requiring a new person to again decide whether course A matches course B. It would be good for each department to have a curriculum person to develop ways to talk about identifying advising challenges and seeing how they can be addressed. Anna noted that having more courses on the BC Transfer Guide would be a good thing.

### **BCCAT Report:**

Anna notes that BCCAT had an updated database behind the BC Transfer Guide. She mentioned that there could be awards for the best minutes. Alex doubted that he would win.

For high school graduation requirements, a Numeracy and Literacy Assessments are introduced in 2019 and 2020. Ministry of Education has been collecting feedback on the curriculum reform.

She mentioned that funding was available for Transfer Innovation projects originating from articulation committees.

There is an orientation guide, and articulation committee companion, and a report on indigenous education pathways on BCCAT's website. Also, "being seen, being counted" report. Current projects include studies on underrepresented groups, non-graduates, international students, and a survey of students' experience of the transfer process. Anyone wishing to receive updates from BCCAT can subscribe to a newsletter which contains news of various proposals.

### **Guest Speaker:**

Cindy on Indigenization. Cindy does not claim to be an expert but does know about some policy issues. She brought up the notions of Decolonization and Indigenization, and that we could discuss what each meant [hey we wouldn't be philosophers if we didn't debate definitions, right?]. Questions were raised: Is the latter a means to the former? Is getting rid of tables and chairs in the classroom part of decolonization? Is having chairs in a circle a compromise? Should we look both at the methodological side and the substantive side of changing courses (how we teach and what we teach)? Are there alternates to adversarial presentations?

Karen suggested that we ask students what they need, and be open to that, especially in matters of methodology (including instructor demeanor). This could also include substantive matters of texts. In general people seemed more open to adjustments in methodology than in what is taught.

Sandy mentions that the philosophy of film class at Camosun was indigenized and became a ½ discussion class where students passed around a "talking owl" in a circle (to foster relationships and listening skills over time), and Indigenous Studies was asked about developing rules for this circle, such as no cross-talk). She suggested contacting our own Indigenous/Aboriginal studies departments for ideas. She noted that one still pushed along content via topics, specific questions to consider. She noted that students stuck around after the last class, which shows they maintained interest. She did note that one loses some of the ability to correct students in class, and also that one class might not generalize to an entire program. Sandy notes that we could benefit from breaking away from the assumption that there is one, Western, way to teach (methodology) or one set of preferred content (substance). That said our cultural mindset is strong. Is there a way to back away from it and remain effective in teaching?

Frank noted that it can be a struggle to integrate Indigenous substance in to courses, since often such substance is passed down orally via elders. Leslie mentioned a journal, but noted that it has not been published recently. It was suggested that bringing in an elder to talk might be useful.

Selman noted that decolonization sounded more like a government issue, and that the definitions of decolonization and indigenization seemed unclear.

It was noted that some classes (philosophy of law) would be easier to indigenize than others (logic). Cindy noted that at the very least we should examine all classes to see where and if indigenization was feasible.

Bruce liked the idea of looking at other traditions, for example how many indigenous traditions see land as sacred, not as a resource, which could have implications for business ethics, and the discussion of property rights.

Sandy noted that we still need to have (and match) learning outcomes.

Sylvia noted that many Indigenous students have (and have had) horrible experiences in the BC academic world, and that many are alienated through how our institutions are structured, and how we shape the classroom. She noted that John Stuart Mill was a colonial administrator even as he was talking about people's freedom. Hobbes explicitly structured the person's relation to the state. Kant's anthropology is racist. Rousseau's writings are racist. So it is worth looking, not only at philosophy, but also at philosophers, and seeing how both might be received by Indigenous students. Is there a different way to get at the philosophically useful concepts of these philosophers than by using these philosophers? Should we at least contextualize these philosophers when we teach them (i.e. mention that these philosophers had flaws, and were racist/colonialist)? What we teach and how we teach it could be a barrier to Indigenous students. Examining these issues and looking for alternatives might also broaden our international base.

Reuben observed that there was a serious problem with the use of the two words, decolonization and indigenization. They were inaccurate generalizations, and if the latter is to gradually replace the former in higher education, it can only be because it is assumed that the colonial enterprise was a faulty one, and that things could be set right by indigenization. But not everything was wrong with the colonial enterprise. Much of what Canada is today, and much of its glorious advancement, is because of the foundations laid during the colonial period. And when we speak about critiquing colonialism, we must critique all colonialisms in all parts of the world at different times in human history, not just European colonialism. So in a subject such as philosophy instructors might be aware of the colonial tendencies of the likes of John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith and are right to highlight them. But an equal effort must be made in identifying the colonial (meaning belonging to a dominating group) inclinations of non-European philosophers such as Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan or Jiddu Krishnamurti

Sandy notes that we could ask what parts of colonization and indigenization are important to engage with at the institutional level, and also ask what do we want to accomplish (with the extra question of what \*can\* we accomplish – philosophy departments are not the Government of Canada, nor even the Government of BC). Sandy notes that we may have multiple goals that are in conflict: Student enrollment, Classroom management, the relationship of the department to the institution.

Again it was suggested that partnerships are the way to go. Talk to Indigenous and Aboriginal Studies in your institution. Even such things as a territorial acknowledgement at the beginning of meetings or classes. Frank notes that he did the latter at the beginning of every lecture, incorporating new things each time (like the weather, etc.) to keep it fresh (as opposed to droning on, which would have been counter-productive). Sandy agreed that this would be a good way to orient.

Sandy noted that student feedback was useful, both from the student body as a whole and from focus groups.

Alex noted that talking to Indigenous/Aboriginal Studies was also useful for avoiding "helping" in the wrong way and avoiding blind spots.

Sandy notes that we could go beyond just reversing past Canadian problems, but also examining present ones and indeed problems around the world (this may overlap with internationalization).

Michael noted that Philosophy itself is on one view not, beyond broad categories such as epistemology and metaphysics, about anything at all, and thus is not inherently colonizing or decolonizing. In any case, the method of teaching philosophy is always up for grabs. Conceivably philosophy could retain its integrity after being indigenized (whatever this means), but the philosophical search for Truth should matter, as opposed to dogmatism or sophistry or nihilism - which is what imputations of colonization seem to be attributing to the discipline.

Alex noted that while Philosophy itself might be an attempt to find the truth, philosophical teaching (and philosophical teachers) can be biased, and thus could benefit from indigenization to mitigate that bias. This could help us to see some of our blind spots.

Sandy suggested that we see this as a challenge to examine whether we really are living up to our own ideals as philosophers, and that indigenization could be a challenge that we can meet. Indeed changes in method and substance can give new perspectives on each other and on philosophy as a whole.

#### **International Students:**

Karen notes that there has been a shift in type and behaviour of student bodies. There has been an increase of plagiarism/cheating.

Reuban notes that many of the students come from a specific region of India (called the Punjabi) and that not all Indian students should be tarred by the same brush. Selman made a suggestion, based on an anecdote, that might potentially explain the behaviour of certain international students – it is possible that in effect we might be getting many students from places where the rule of law has somewhat broken down and is seen to have broken down, so that adherence to laws are replaced by bargaining (such as students trying to get student bus passes at an institution that does not have that deal with Vancouver's translink in place). Selman qualified this, noting that he had not been to the region and thus could not speak with any certainty on the matter.

\*\*\*At this point Alex Boston had to leave and Leslie Burkholder took over the minutes\*\*\*

Articulation meeting notes cont'd.

Leslie Burkholder

25 May 2018 Camosun College

A discussion topic was raised by Lyle about Punjabi students in critical thinking and some other courses.

(1) Alexander College and some other colleges (eg Columbia College) have large numbers of Punjabi students. Students may be directly from India or from BC.

(2) Instructors see various kinds of academic problems with these students at rates statistically significantly greater than with other groups.

(2a) These students cheat at greater rates; it is unclear whether they think of it as cheating.

(2b) These students are less likely to understand material; it's unclear why.

(2c) These students are more likely to do poorly on tests. Their grades are very low, perhaps because of the aforementioned problem with understanding material mentioned in 2b. Lyle presented charts showing grade distributions in a critical thinking course at Alexander College as evidence.

(2d) These students present classroom control problems at greater rates.

This issue seems to be known about by college administrators. Some colleges have made efforts to not allow admission of Punjabi students or try to recruit students instead from other groups.

Discussion of institutional reports to be done after meeting adjourned and continued in pub.

Meeting ended at about 4.30pm.

**Next Meeting:** Friday, May 24, 2019 at Langara College.

**Addendum** (not in official meeting minutes, but possibly useful information):

(added by Leslie Burkholder)

Lyle earlier in the meeting reported attending the "Developing minds – critical thinking in curriculum transfer" at SFU in Feb 2018. It's also mentioned on the BCCAT Spring Update document.

It turns out that there are conference reports online at <https://www.sfu.ca/conferences/criticalthinking.html>.

Leslie contributed some references on indigenization

(a) There is some push from the provincial government for indigenizing all regular courses at the post-secondary level, as shown in the upcoming session at the Festival of Learning:

(<https://bccampus.ca/2016/04/19/supporting-the-indigenization-of-higher-education-in-b-c/>)

(b) Here is what the Justice Institute of BC thinks indigenizing requires (<http://www.jibc.ca/about-jibc/office-indigenization/indigenization>)

(c) The province has of course mandated a First Peoples curriculum for K - 12. It says that every subject — including math or, if this were taught in schools, symbolic logic — should have a First Nations component. (See <https://theyee.ca/News/2017/09/05/Bumpy-Start-for-BC-First-Peoples-Curriculum/>).