

Contact Us

Department of Religion and Philosophy

Religion Website
Philosophy Website

David Hayworth Hall
High Point University
One University Parkway
High Point, NC 27268

Katja Brown, Administrative
Assistant:
Kbrown7@highpoint.edu
336-841-9691

HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

The Premier Life Skills University®

Department of Religion and Philosophy Newsletter

Fall 2025 and Spring 2026



The Parker-Locke Award winners Ivy Scott (center, '26) and Liam Cavicchia (right, '26) with Rev. Dr. Christopher Franks (left).

Note from the Chair

What a year! From student research to new student programs to guest lecturers to newly developed courses to faculty achievements, there have been no dull moments in the department in 2025-2026. We share these updates with you most of all because we love our students and are so happy to celebrate in these pages what they have done and will do. The department also welcomed Dr. Anna Marsh, Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible, this year. Thank you for your friendship with the department, and thank you for letting us share these moments from David Hayworth Hall.

Warmly,

Rev. Dr. Chris Franks
cfranks@highpoint.edu

Student News

The Parker-Locke Award for outstanding academic achievement and leadership ability by a graduating major or majors in 2026 went to **Liam Cavicchia** and **Ivy Scott**.

ΦΣΤ (Phi Sigma Tau) is the International Honor Society in Philosophy. To qualify, students must major or minor in philosophy and meet rigorous academic standards demonstrating their commitment to and excellence in the study of philosophy. The Department of Religion and Philosophy inducted 9 students into Phi Sigma Tau. The nine students inducted this year were: Alex Constantinou, Gena Ghandour, Ariel Howard, Katie Lamb, Nathan Lattimore, Maddie Molis, Julia Ravega, Mathew Robson, and Finn Twomey.



Spring 2026 Phi Sigma Tau from left to right: Mathew Robson, Julia Ravega, Maddie Molis, Ariel Howard, Alex Constantinou.

ΘAK (Theta Alpha Kappa) is the national honor society for religious studies and theology. To qualify, students must major or minor in religion, have completed at least 12 credits in that area, and have a high GPA demonstrating excellence in both the discipline and their overall studies. In the spring of 2026, the department inducted Braxton Finch ('27), Mia Spies ('27), and Alina Zimavaya ('26). Congratulations!



Spring 2026 Theta Alpha Kappa from left to right: Liam Cavicchia (inducted 2025) and Mia Spies ('27).

The department also recognized the work of student mentors in its inaugural **Peer Mentorship program**, which pairs more senior students in the department with mentees. This year's mentors were Liam Cavicchia ('26), Ariel Howard ('26), Ivy Scott ('26), and Mia Spies ('27).

Student Research

In Spring 2026, Ivy Scott ('26 Religion) and the members of HPU's **Ethics Bowl Team** presented on Honors day at HPU's student research symposium, **High-PURCS**.

The poster is titled "THE PHILOSOPHER KING: CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS ON LEADERSHIP ETHICS". It lists Student Authors (Ash Appel, Rachel Grise, Ariel Howard, Ben Mathews, Nate Smith) and Faculty Sponsors (Amy MacArthur & Thaddeus Ostrowski - High Point University). The poster is divided into several sections: Cases (Atomic Bomb, Corporate Responsibility, Ethical Dilemmas in the Workplace, Military Leadership, Public School Education, Queen of Cuba, Remote Learning and COVID-19, School's Out - Of Money, World Leadership in the Age of Information and Artificial Intelligence), Corporate Responsibility, Surprise Case: Olympic, The Philosopher King (Wisdom, Courage, Temperance), Atomic Bomb, and Public School Education. It also includes an Acknowledgements section for other Ethics Bowl members and the official sponsor.

The members of **the Ethics Bowl** created and presented a poster entitled "The Philosopher-King: Contemporary Applications of Leadership Ethics," which reflected the theoretical framework the team adopted to analyze the cases that were used in the Ethics Bowl Competition.



Ivy Scott presenting "The Theoretical and Practical Convergence of Colonial European Christianity and Cherokee Religion on the North American Continent" which was her Honors Project that she worked on with Dr. Robert Moses.

In the summer of 2025, students participated in **internships**, including Evan Parkerson ('26), who interned with Austin Ridge Bible Church in Austin, Texas, and Mia Spies ('27), who interned with First United Methodist Church in High Point, North Carolina.

Spies writes: "As a ministry intern, I assisted the church leaders with various aspects of ministry, including planning and leading the liturgy for worship services, leading musical worship, and engaging with the congregation. Additionally, I helped with administrative tasks, youth group, and congregational care while gaining hands-on experience and spiritual development. During my time at FUMC, I gained hands-on experience working with those facing significant hardships. I often helped pick out clothes for

children at our free clothing closet, comforted those actively grieving the loss of their spouses/parents, and connected underprivileged families with food assistance resources on a weekly basis. I learned in that internship that Jesus is more often found in the food pantry rather than in the pews. This inspired me to take more classes this upcoming school year that focus on expanding ministry beyond the four walls of the church."

Student Clubs

FOCUS pre-ministry group (Rev. Dr. Chris Franks advising) connects students discerning a call into ministry. FOCUS students share weekly lunches, support each other in their various leadership roles, and meet monthly for reflection and conversation. Monthly meetings this year walked through the Sermon on the Mount, guided by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Dr. Amy MacArthur and **Mr. Thaddeus Ostrowski** took a team of five students to this year's **Ethics Bowl** competition, which occurred in Raleigh on February 6-7, 2026. The theme was Leadership Ethics. The five students who attended the competition were **Ash Appel**, **Rachel Grise**, **Ariel Howard**, **Ben Mathews**, and **Nate Smith**. Four more students -- **Camila Ferreira Contreras**, **Lauren Mignatti**, **Julian Mullen**, and **Ashley Rodriguez** -- helped with case preparation and contributed to the creation of a poster the team presented at High-PURCs on Honors Day 2026. The title of the poster, "The Philosopher-King: Contemporary Applications of Leadership Ethics," reflected the theoretical framework the team adopted to analyze the cases that were used in the competition.



HPU's 2026 NCICU Ethics Bowl Team: Front row, from left to right: Ariel Howard, Ash Appel, and Nate Smith. Back row, from left to right: Mr. Thaddeus Ostrowski, Rachel Grise, Ben Mathews, and Dr. Amy Lynn MacArthur.

The Philosophy Club met 8 times in the fall of 2025 and 8 times in the spring of 2026, covering a wide range of student-led topics including: human nature, ethics and AI, moral value rankings, the philosophy of *The Hunger Games*, the duality of human beings, the philosophy of psychopathology, and the ethics of colonization. They also hosted two game nights and a fall camping trip at Oak Hollow Lake. There are approximately 30 active members of the Philosophy Club, with 8-10 members on average attending each meeting.

Department News



The department welcomed **Dr. Anna Marsh** as Assistant Professor of Religion at the start of the 2025-2026 academic year. She teaches courses in Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies and directs our interdisciplinary Jewish Studies Minor. Anna earned her PhD in 2022 from the Jewish Theological Seminary in NYC, then taught at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN for three years before taking her current position at HPU. Her research areas include gender criticism, food studies, and literary approaches to the Bible. Her first book, *Food, Gender and Power in the Book of Samuel* is forthcoming from Brill Academic Press in the fall of 2026. She presents regularly at academic conferences and enjoys teaching in local congregations as well.

Her hobbies include cooking, yoga, pub trivia, gardening, and she always wants to know what you're watching on TV. She is currently settling into life in the Triad after moving to NC last summer with her husband (also a biblical scholar), young daughter (5), and old dog (14).



The Department welcomed Dr. C. Clifton Black, retired Otto A. Piper Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, who gave the Fall Lecture entitled "To Love Kindness."



In November, Dr. Kaitlyn Ugoretz, Postdoctoral Fellow in East Asian Cinema and Media Studies at the Habib Institute for Asian Studies at the University of Idaho, gave a talk entitled "Playing Shinto: Engaging with Japanese Religion in Video Games." Dr. Ugoretz's visit was sponsored by The Religion and Philosophy Department, The Communications Fellows Program, and the Distinguished Speakers' Bureau of the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies.



The **Spring 2026 Charles Franklin Finch Lecture** was delivered on Mar. 16, 2026, by Dr. William Cavanaugh Professor of Catholic Studies and Director of the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University. The lecture was entitled "Does Religion Promote Violence?"



Department faculty and students gathered for a **Fall Social** on Nov. 14. It was one way to make the most of the David Hayworth Lounge during its last year as a lounge before being converted into a new office suite for the Dean of the Douglas S. Witcher School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences

Recent Faculty Research and Activities



Department faculty hard at work at the Douglas S. Witcher School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences Spring 2026 retreat.

Rev. Dr. Chris Franks (Chair)

- Convenor for session at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics on Jan. 11, 2026.
- Presented a series of five talks over five weeks on "The Mystery of the Cross" at Centenary United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, NC, from Feb. 25-Mar. 25, 2026.
- Looking forward to teaching Ecclesiastical Latin in the Fall.

Dr. Matthew Brophy

- Presented "The Co-Educational Classroom: Students, Teachers, and Chatbots in Ethical Dialogue" at "Exponential Intelligence: Advancing AI Beyond Boundaries and Disciplines," North Carolina A & T State University, September 25–26, 2025.
- Served on a panel, "Across Disciplines: Four Faculty Perspectives on Putting AI into Practice," at "Exponential Intelligence: Advancing AI Beyond Boundaries and Disciplines," North Carolina A & T State University, September 25–26, 2025.
- Co-presented with Dr. Justin Cook "From Policing to Pedagogy: AI-assisted Writing Moves in the Classroom" at "AI for Extraordinary Education," High Point University, May 5, 2026.
- Presented "AI as Accommodation" at "AI for Extraordinary Education," High Point University, May 5, 2026.
- Released "Black Box Deployed — Functional Criteria for Artificial Moral Agents in the LLM Era," arXiv preprint arXiv:2507.13175, 2025 - arxiv.org (July 2025).
- Published "Wide Reflective Equilibrium in LLM Alignment: Bridging Moral Epistemology and AI Safety" in *Ethics and Information Technology*, Vol. 28(2):21 (2026).
- Published "3-Year Degrees Misread the Future Job Market" in *Inside Higher Ed*, April 21, 2026.
- Received the Innovative Teaching Award from the Douglas S. Witcher School of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences, May 2026.

Dr. Claudine Davidshofer

- Presented “Kierkegaard’s *Prefaces*: A Critique of Hegel’s Preface to the *Phenomenology*” at the annual conference for the Association of Philosophy and Literature, held at the Goethe-Universitat in Frankfurt, Germany in August 2025. The conference theme was "Borders, Dialectics, and Civility."
- Accepted to present "Kierkegaard's Book of *Prefaces* and Kierkegaard's Prefaces to Books" at the annual Soren Kierkegaard Research Centre Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in August 2026. The conference theme is "Kierkegaard's Plurality and Totality." .

Dr. Carl Helsing

- Assumed the role of Director of Learning Communities at HPU; developed the new Learning Community practicum LCP-1000, to be started in Fall of 2026.
- Guided REL and PHL students in comparative philosophy and religion in Senior Seminar PHL-REL 4099.
- Presented a guest lecture at Wake Forest University on the classical Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi.
- Presented scholarship on philosophies of language in Zhuangzi and Wittgenstein at the Carolina Conference of Chinese Thought (April 3-4) at Sweet Briar College, Va.

Dr. Beth Hupfer

- Published “From Bednets to Rocket Ships: Efficiency in the Long-Term and Neglect for the Present” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 42:4 (August 2025): 1190-1209.
- Finalist for the *Journal of Applied Philosophy* best paper of 2025 award.
- Co-presented "Moral Panics" at the 2026 Joint Meeting of the South Carolina Society of Philosophy and the North Carolina Philosophical Society, Furman University, Greenville, SC.
- Started teaching a new Intellectual Discovery (DIS) course in Fall 2025 on "Illusions, Delusions, and Lies."

Dr. Amy MacArthur

- Applied for and was awarded (along with Dr. Pam Lundin, Associate Professor of Chemistry and Assistant Director of the HPU Honors Program) a \$33,000 Capacity-Building Grant from the Educating Character Initiative at the Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University. Grant funds will be used to bolster the ethics learning outcome in the HPU Honors Program curriculum by incorporating character education into Honors courses and co-curricular programs.
- Served as faculty mentor for URCW's Summer Research Institute (SuRI), overseeing a project by Jade Alston entitled "The Barriers and Facilitators to Access to Abortion Care for Black Women: The Enduring Legacy of Jim Crow."
- Served as faculty co-coordinator (along with Mr. Thaddeus Ostrowski, Instructor of Religion and Philosophy) of the NCICU 15th annual Ethics Bowl competition (2026 topic: Leadership Ethics); recognized as one of three faculty coordinators who have participated in all 15 years of the Ethics Bowl.

Dr. Anna Marsh

- Published an essay entitled “Tending the Garden of Anger: Reading Jonah with Affect Theory” in the series *Themes and Issues in Biblical Studies* (Equinox Press, 2026).
- The manuscript for her first book, *Food, Gender and Power in the Book of Samuel* (Brill Academic Press), has been approved and the book is now in production (expected Fall 2026).
- Serves as co-chair and steering committee member of the Meals in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament unit of the Society of Biblical Literature.
- Taught adult education sessions in local congregations on “Esther Through the Ages” and “Reading the Bible like a Grown-Up.”
- Served as the keynote speaker for the annual meeting of the Saint Paul Area Synod of the ELCA
- ...and joined the faculty of HPU!

Dr. Matthew Mitchell

- Presented in the “Teaching Buddhism in 2025” Roundtable at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Boston, MA, Nov. 21-25.
- Presented “Renewing Practices, Revitalizing a Fractured Community, and Rebuilding a Pilgrimage Site: Abbess Chikei’s Work and Networking to Rebuild Zenkōji Temple in Late 16th and Early 17th Century Japan” at the American Academy of Religion regional Southeast Conference at Furman University, February 27-March 1, 2026.
- Applied for and was awarded a \$5000 manuscript development grant from the Kuroda Institute of Buddhist Studies.
- Applied for and was awarded a grant from the Distinguished Speakers’ Bureau of the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies to bring Dr. Kaitlyn Ugoretz to campus to give a research talk and visit a classroom.
- Developed “From Shrines to Skylines,” a MayMester course to Osaka which will be offered May 2027.
- Continued to be East Asian/Mahayana Review Editor for Religious Studies Review.
- Was a Steering Committee Member for the Space, Place, and Religion Unit of the American Academy of Religion until December 2025 and became a Steering Committee Member for the Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit of the American Academy of Religion in December 2025.

Dr. Caroline Mobley

- Presented “LaVar Ball: A Virtue Ethical Analysis of an Overbearing Sports Parent” at the North Carolina Philosophical Society’s annual meeting (March 2026)
- Presented “Disability in the Classroom” as a WHBS Faculty Forum
- Co-developed “Ancient Arguments,” a MayMester course in Athens which is set for May 2027

Dr. Robert Moses

- Taught ITG-3012-Between the Sacred and the Sacrilegious for the first time in Fall 2025.
- Accepted an invitation to join the Advisory Board of The Cascade Library of Gospels Studies.
- Is serving as lead editor for the volume Paul and Universalism: The Scope of God’s Deliverance.
- Presented “The Beatitudes: A New Proposal” at the Society of New Testament Studies Conference, Regensburg, Germany, August 6, 2025.
- Served as speaker at the Memorial for Homelessness hosted by Open Door Ministries, West End Ministries, and The Salvation Army of High Point. December 16, 2025.
- Served as a judge for the City of High Point’s Martin Luther King Oratory Essay Contest, January 16, 2026.
- Directed the Department Honors Thesis by Ivy Scott, “The Theoretical and Practical Convergence of Colonial European Christianity and Cherokee Religion on the North American Continent,” Spring 2026

How to Donate to the Religion/Philosophy Scholarship Fund

Gifts made to support the Religion and Philosophy Endowed Scholarship Fund provide meaningful support to students majoring in these disciplines each year. They are a critical resource to ensuring students can pursue this extraordinary education in a successful way. If you wish to make a gift to support these students and our department, you may give online by clicking the button below.

Give Now

You may also mail a check to the address below. Please include “Religion and Philosophy Scholarship” in the memo line.

High Point University
One University Parkway, Drawer 39
High Point, NC 27268

2026 graduates, please complete our graduate survey [here](#):



Alumni, please share your updates with us [here](#):

