After a unanimous positive vote from the University Council last spring, acting president John Smithson gave formal approval to the Department’s proposal for a Master of Arts program in Theology and Society.

The implementation of the program will proceed gradually under the guidance of program director, Dr. Millicent C. Feske.

The 36-credit program will enable students to study a range of theological disciplines, while also engaging in conversation with the questions and needs of American and global society. This interaction between Catholic and other Christian traditions, on the one hand, and contemporary culture, on the other, will inform both professional and volunteer work in church, school, service, or marketplace contexts.

The program puts "Faith and Culture in Critical Conversation" with one another.

Courses in ethics, biblical studies, systematic theology, historical theology, and interreligious relations are designed to interrelate and to offer a dynamic dialogue with the challenges of our world.

As Dr. Feske explains, “The Master’s degree in Theology and Society is designed for men and women in professional and volunteer ministries and for those who wish to study theology more deeply and at an advanced level. The mission of the University is about the relationship between intellect and justice and that is at the core of this program.”

For more information, see the program’s website: http://www.sju.edu/majors/programs/graduate-arts-sciences/masters/theology-and-society

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**From the Chair**

**Dr. Shawn Krahmer**

We were on a Greek island, our context a particularly tantalizing distraction for my 13 students. But I had reached my limit of tolerance by the end of the third three hour session for which they had arrived completely unprepared for class. It is extraordinarily difficult to be the only energy source in a room for three hours. Even more difficult to hold a dialogue with one’s self.

At first I got depressed. Then I got angry. Then I received an e-mail which reminded me that mentally “skipping out and not tuning in is a symptom of soul-los... call forth their soul vs. their morality, it might do some good.”

Given my upbringing, I’m much better at moralizing, at inveighing against laziness, screwed up priorities, and egotistical self-centeredness. I am better at complaining about how today’s students are spoiled, about their inexplicable sense of entitlement. I do better with “should”s and “ought”s, rewards and punishments, than with recalling students to soul, to mindfulness of their deep and better selves, or in Thomas Merton’s language, their true selves.

How do I encourage students who aren’t even certain God exists to reach deep into themselves for the really real? How do I move them beyond the surface values of “the world” that at their age tend to focus upon fitting in, often through heavy drinking?

At the practical level, I sought to appeal to their baser instincts: “If you come unprepared for class tomorrow night, we will sit there and read for three hours, and I will schedule another class while we are on Crete.” Sometimes base appeals work.

With respect to calling forth “soul,” I started with some of the themes in our class. I had used Sandra Schneider’s definition of spirituality: “Spirituality is the act of conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives.” What is the ultimate value which currently drives your thinking and doing, around which you integrate your life? They didn’t understand the question! We spent 30 minutes or more wrestling together with what our life values might be – love, truth, happiness. They reminded me they were only 21. I reminded them that persons in the Middle Ages would have been married by age 15 and have lived half their life expectancy by age 21.

Each class thereafter, we returned to the question in one way or another. You are not the center of the universe. So what idea or value or goal outside yourself are you directing your life towards? Another variant: The monks and nuns whom we have studied all gave up power, prestige, and normal social relations to gain something they considered more important. Is their an idea, a value, a person, an object “out there” that is or could become so important to you that you would make sacrifices in order to obtain it?

Or: looking at your own life, what repulses you? What attracts you? What is the deep truth in what attracts you? Identify all the places you find this in your life. How could you increase the presence of this attraction in your life?

I’ve given students the option of writing a 7-10 page paper on one of several questions like this, or of doing a traditional academic course summary paper in which our themes are drawn together with a thesis. I bet that all of my students will accept this option. Although I’m still a neophyte when it comes to “calling forth soul,” I’m becoming more and more convinced that this is a task worth taking up. And I’ve found that even when students don’t know how to answer these questions, they appreciate being asked to think about them.
services and director of the Institute says he expects the filters to be available for use in September. “Everyone on the planet deserves access to clean water – it is a basic human right,” says Fr. Clark. “We are thrilled that this project has come to fruition, and that the filters will very shortly be contributing to a better quality of life for individuals living in vulnerable communities.”

Bioethics Institute Develops Sustainable Water Filter

The World Health Organization estimates that 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to a safe and adequate water supply. To help address this public health crisis, a team of students, faculty and fellows associated with SJU’s Institute of Catholic Bioethics has developed an inexpensive and sustainable slow-sand water filter for use by less-developed nations.

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New Honor Society Members Inducted

On Apr. 18 2012, the Department inducted new members into the Alpha Xi chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa, the Nat’l Honor Society for Religious Studies-Theology. (L to r:) Dr. Shawn Krahmer, Juliette D’Ambrosio, Hannah Abrams, Matthew Bender, Dr. Gerard Jacobitz.

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Faculty Publications

Gerald J. Beyer


[In Polish:] “Open the doors to all ... Solidarity with the poor, the right to education and Catholic universities in the U.S. and Polish society,” trans. D. Chabrajska, Ethos 24/4 (2011): 133-167.


“A Catholic Call to Abolish the Death Penalty” (co-author), Catholic Moral Theology, Oct 10, 2011. A statement signed by 395 Catholic scholars and printed in many major news outlets.

Peter Clark, S.J.


“Ethics Training for Medical Interns/Residents in the Mercy Health System,” Health Progress 93 (3) May-June 2012.

“Death With Dignity: Ethical and Practical Considerations of the Terminally Ill,” Univ. of Scranton/Univ. of Chicago Press.

**Department Welcomes Dr. Susan Andrews**

The newest addition to the Department’s faculty is Dr. Susan Andrews, a specialist in Chinese religions. She has recently completed her PhD at Columbia University in New York, and will join us in January 2013. Dr. Andrews holds Masters degrees from both McMaster University and from Columbia, and has taught at the University of San Francisco and at Mount Allison University.

As an expert in pre-modern Chinese religions, her research focuses on East Asian sacred place and pilgrimage traditions, interactions between cults dedicated to local deities and those devoted to bodhisattvas, and the relationship between hagiography and landscape.

These subjects converge in the question: How do stories of a religious figure’s life and connection to a place contribute to the sense that a site is sacred and merits devotion?

In addition to research in China, Dr. Andrews is also knowledgeable in the area of Japanese Religions, having been a Research Fellow at the Institute for Comprehensive Buddhist Studies at Taisho University in Tokyo, Japan in 2005-2006 and has taught courses in Japanese Religions.

Dr. Andrew’s proposed course for Spring 2013 sound intriguing: “Food Practices and Chinese Religions” “Death and the Afterlife in Chinese Religions.” She is also developing a course to be taught during the summer of 2013, as part of Saint Joseph’s China Summer Program. This course, will take students to Mount Wutai in China, will be called “Superhumans in Chinese Religions.”

Welcome aboard, Dr. Andrews!

**Faculty Presentations and Activities**

**Gerald J. Beyer**


“The Occupy Movement and Catholic Social Teaching,” Saint Joseph’s University, Mar 21, 2012

“Workers’ Rights and Socially Responsible Investing in the Catholic Tradition: A Case Study,” Catholic Social Teaching and Human Rights Conference, Villanova University, Mar 19-20, 2012

“Is Solidarity Contrary to Human Nature? Insights from Evolutionary Biology,” Krakow University of Economics, Krakow, Poland, November 26, 2011

“Can Poland’s Solidarity be Globalized? Insights from Evolutionary Biology,” International Conference “Ethical Pluralism and Solidarity,” Prague Metropolitan University, Prague, Czech Republic, April 26, 2011

**James F. Caccamo**

“Mediating God in a New Media World,” Annual Meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, June 8, 2012.


“Mediating God in a New Media World” (technology and liturgy) Annual Meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, St. Louis, MO, June 8, 2012.

**Peter Clark, S.J.**


“Ethical Principles for Moral Decision Making” and “Advance Directives, Living Wills, and Do Not Resuscitate Orders: Medical, Legal and Ethical Perspectives,” Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dec 13, 2011.


**Philip A. Cunningham**


“Jesus: the Jew and the Christ,” American Jewish Committee/ Jewish Community Relations Board, Kansas City, MO, Nov 6, 2011.

“Principles When Theologizing about the Church of Christ and the People of Israel,” Rockhurst University, Kansas City, MO, Nov 7, 2011.


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Faculty Presentations and Activities (continued from p. 3)


Katie Oxx

Presented on the spatial religious history of Philadelphia to NEH institute on spatial narratives hosted by the Polis Center at Indiana U.- Purdue U. of Indiana.

Bruce Wells
Participated in work session: the Cambridge Comparative History of Ancient Law; lead author of chapter "Law and Religion," July 2012 in Cambridge, UK


Faculty Publications (continued from p. 2)

"Medical Marijuana: Medical Necessity versus Political Agenda" (with Kevin Capuzzi, Cameron Fick), Medical Science Monitor, Dec. 2011, based on Fick’s SJU summer scholars project.

(Co-author) "Undocumented Patients: What is required when the line between emergency and chronic care blurs?" Hastings Center Report, Jan-Feb 2011.

Philip A. Cunningham


"Catholic-Jewish Relations: How Far We’ve Come, How Far We’ve Yet To Go" (with E. Greenberg, Religion News Service, The Huffington Post, August 31, 2011


Millicent C. Feske


Katie Oxx


Bruce Wells

