

# jots & tittles

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## Department Chair's Greeting

We hope you're having a great semester! We're enjoying working with you on your spring classes, and we're looking forward to Fall 2023. Meanwhile, we've been revising and expanding PHRE's programs. We've added a fifth minor (**Science & Values**), revised the major, and expanded our other minors: **Ethics, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Religious-Cultural Literacy for Care Professions**.

## Faculty Spotlight on Research

Paul Thomas and Geoffrey Pollick: Two of our religious studies faculty, Dr. Paul Thomas and Dr. Geoffrey Pollick, have recently turned attention to the Appalachian region in their research. *Jots and Tittles* asked them to share a bit about their work and why they're finding Radford University's geographical position in Appalachia to be a productive site for exploring religion.

*Both of you presented research at the recent meeting of the Appalachian Studies Association. Can you tell us a bit about what you presented and the larger projects from which they draw?*

Dr. Thomas: My presentation analyzed the ecological discourse found in the horror anthology podcast titled "Old

## It's time for Registration!

*Take a look at some of our courses*

- PHIL 216** Ancient Philosophy **Cales**
- PHIL 290** Religion & Sports **Turner**
- PHIL 310** Professional Ethics **Fesmire**
- PHIL 320** Philosophy of Mind & Metaphysics  
**Axtell**
- PHIL 430** Advanced Healthcare Ethics **Shomaker**
- RELN 375** Religion & American Identities **Pollick**
- RELN 381** Religion & Experiences of Death & Dying **Rothgery**

### Full Course List:

<https://www.radford.edu/content/chbs/home/phre/courses/fall.html>

## Student Spotlight



DeAngelo Nichols

*What attracted you to the philosophy and religious studies major?*

What attracted me to philosophy was the ability to further my own understanding of people. I believe that gaps and

disconnects in a society come at least in part from a lack of understanding and awareness of the other side. This makes it easy to villainize. In my philosophy classes I've learned ideas that help me to conduct my everyday life, and ultimately that is what I was looking for in my college experience.

Gods of Appalachia.” Contrary to the romantic ideal of “Mother Nature,” in the podcast, Appalachia—as a mother—both feeds humans and consumes humans. I considered how this ecological discourse relates to monsters.

Dr. Pollick: With Dr. Aysha Bodenhamer in the Radford University Department of Sociology, I discussed the role of religion and gender in the ways that Central Appalachian coal miners who have been diagnosed with black lung disease describe the impacts of illness on their lives. We found that religion provides a means of coping with the emotional effects of black lung, and that it provides connections to spiritual healing techniques and material resources through religious communities.

*Dr. Thomas, your paper references the phrase “dark ecology.” What are the main insights or propositions involved in this area of scholarship, and how do they relate to religion?*

Dark ecology was largely defined by a scholar named Timothy Morton. It rejects the nature and civilization dichotomy of pastoral ecology. Dark ecology proposes that nature has its romantic pastoral



## Student Spotlight Continued

*How has taking philosophy and religious studies courses benefited you?*

My philosophy classes have furthered my self-understanding within the reality I exist in. Every semester I encounter new ideas that completely reshape my perspective, and I like to think that this has made me a more virtuous and contemplative person.

*Which classes have been among your favorites?*

My favorite classes were my metaphysical philosophy and ethics classes. I quote anti-essentialism, as well as the double-slit experiment and its possible implications, to my friends and family almost daily.

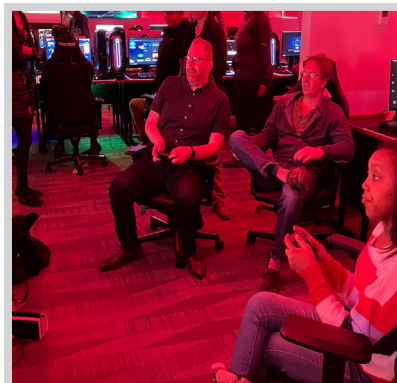
*What do you plan to do after college?*

My plan after college is to attend law school.

*Why should students consider a major in philosophy and religious studies?*

I think that all people should take an ethics class, not just college students. Oftentimes the disconnect between people is rooted in different perspectives about virtues. I think it is important for all people to be study these differences and their implications, instead of just having heated discussions in which people attempt to defeat the other side.

## Department Events



### Gaming with Professors

#### *Gaming with Professors*

took place on March 22nd, 2023 in RU's new E-Sports center. The event was a total success.

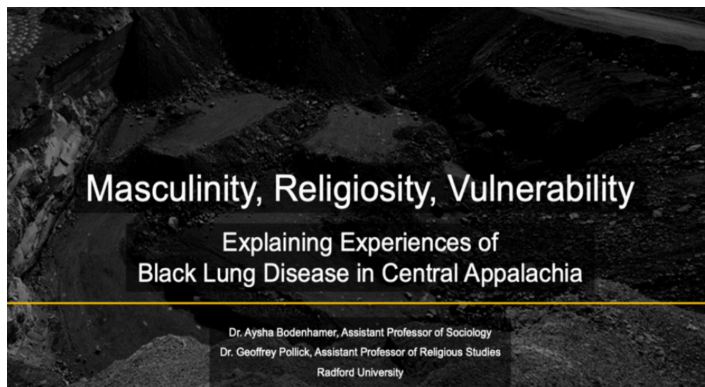
### Humanities Days

Humanities Days will take place April 4th-6th, 2023

characteristics as well as its nightmare forms. The nightmare forms of nature are well represented in “Old Gods of Appalachia.” This project stems from my prior research on the horrible and the monstrous.

**Dr. Pollick, why do you find religion to be a significant aspect of the experience of illness? What about black lung disease connects to religion?**

I borrow the idea from public health scholar Ellen Idler that religion is an often “invisible social determinant” of health. Religions convey numerous benefits that can assist with managing illness, such as a sense of belonging to a community, social institutions that provide material resources, and ideas that promote healthy behaviors like seeking care when needed. Religions can also counteract health as defined by scientific biomedicine, particularly when they propose spiritual healing techniques that contradict biomedical advice from healthcare providers, or when they structure explanations for illness



that cause emotional distress. The coal miners interviewed in this project all live in areas of extremely high concentrations of Christianity. Many of them expressed a

## Faculty Spotlight on Research Continued

sense of relying on divine healing, hoping that God would provide material support to counteract lost income from disability. Many participated in a congregation as a way to maintain social connection despite physical limitations imposed by illness.

*What's next for each of you in developing these projects further? Are you at work in any other areas of scholarship relating to Appalachia?*

Dr. Thomas: I'm expanding some of these ideas into an article for publication.

Dr Pollick: This project may continue to develop into a written analysis, and I'm at work on a different project to document the interactions of race and religion in the mid-nineteenth-century development of the place now known as Radford City, on the eastern edges of Appalachia.



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### About PHRE

Radford University's Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies produces students who are excellent critical thinkers and problem solvers ready to engage in a multicultural and global workforce. Visit us online or in CHBS 4202.

Box 6943, East Main Street, Radford, VA 24142

