



# Out of Our Minds...

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## *Out of my mind ...*

*E. Brimacombe, Department Chair*

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### *In this issue ...*

**Katie Winters** writes  
about Café  
Philosophy (pp 2, 3)

Last week I read an article in the local paper about hosting a dinner party. After celebrating the joy of communal dining, the article posed “two serious questions” for all would-be-dinner-party-hosts to consider before setting the dinner menu:

*Do I have time to do all this? And do I have the skill to pull it off?*

The advice that followed was “If you’re not sure, don’t attempt it”.

I re-read that passage, smiling as I remembered hosting dinner parties and attempting recipes where I had no clue what the ingredients listed *were* (yet, I forged on to concoct the dish – as best as I understood it). Thinking more broadly to the context of the big dinner party of life .... If I lived my life by screening all potential ventures by pausing to wonder whether I have sufficient time and skill to pull things off, I think I/my life would grind to a halt. And I suspect I would not be the only one standing still. Life for me is a perpetual flurry of saying “yes” to unfamiliar tasks in a context where I am already overscheduled. I say “yes” knowing full well that I have neither the time nor necessarily the skill the task requires. Yet I say “yes” believing that I will figure it out and manage to somehow get everything done before deadline. And typically my “I’ll figure it out” attitude leads me to the finish line.

The academic realm is filled with people stepping into arenas without training or experience to guide them ... university educators teaching classes without benefit of teacher training, graduate students and faculty members completing research projects while scrambling to acquire the statistical knowledge necessary to make sense of the data, department chairs (or at least one that I know of) with no accounting training managing the department funds ...

Would we be any better off if we viewed each task in our path and carefully considered: *Do I have the time to do this? And do I have the skill to pull it off?* Perhaps in the realm of choosing what to cook at the next dinner party, the questions can help calm the wary chef. But, in the unscripted, time-pressured world beyond the well-planned dinner party, I think considering those questions will often only light a fire under your inner stress centre.

The words of a Shel Silverstein poem mirror my sense of moving through life ...

*How do you know if a window is open?*

*Throw a rock at it.*

*Did it make a sound? No? ... That one was open.*

I say tuck into life’s banquet – risk using the wrong fork, try a new restaurant, tackle a complicated recipe. So what if the soufflé doesn’t rise?

## Psi Chi News – Kyle Mathewson *Psi Chi President*



*“I am thrilled with the opportunity of leading the first Canadian chapter of Psi Chi this coming year”*

My name is Kyle Mathewson, and I extremely excited about becoming the 2006/07 Chapter President of Psi Chi. I am a fourth year honors psychology student here at UVic. For my honors thesis I am investigating the changes in behaviour and brain function that take place during reinforcement learning of a motor sequence using Event-Related Potential brain imaging in the lab of Dr. Clay Holroyd, a project I have been working on since early 2006. In addition to learning and memory in the brain, my interests include language and its effect on thought, animal communication, human evolution, autism, and unconscious cognitive processes. I am currently in the process of applying to graduate school in cognitive neuroscience programs throughout Canada and the United States.

I am thrilled with the opportunity of leading the first Canadian chapter of Psi Chi this coming year, and regret that a major portion of the term has already passed by. I look forward to working with Vice President Myta Langton, Secretary Atlantis Minnings, Treasurer Brian Buchan, Member at Large Jeffery Sun, and Faculty Advisors Dr. Stephen Lindsay and Dr. Liz Brimacombe, members of the new executive board, in making this a successful and effective year for Psi Chi Victoria. The limited time left only makes it even more crucial to get started as soon as possible.

Our programming is beginning to pick up steam as our new board takes over the reigns. The first general meeting took place Thursday, November 28 at 2:30 in Cornett A120. In the near future we are also looking forward to a joint social event with the Undergraduate Psychology Society PsychOS, a January membership drive, and a bake sale. Later this year, we will be holding a graduate school application information session and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April the UVic psychology honors class will be holding a research poster session and inviting students from schools all over the Island, as well as students here at UVic doing independent research projects.

I would lastly like to extend our appreciation and thanks to the outgoing executive board. Your hard work throughout the past year further solidified are growing chapter's roots, giving it the support it needs to grow stronger in the coming years.

With Excitement,

Kyle Mathewson  
[psichi@uvic.ca](mailto:psichi@uvic.ca)

Be sure to check out <http://web.uvic.ca/~psichi/> for upcoming events, links, fun, and more.

Beginning the first week of December Psi Chi will be sponsoring a donation drive to support the UVic Family Centre, a resource and support service for students with families living on and off campus. Psi Chi members will be collecting non-perishable foodstuffs outside the joint Psi Chi/PsychOS Resource Room located at Cornet A175. If you would like to make a cash donation, please stop by the Resource Room, Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays between 9:00a.m. and noon. For more information, contact [psichi@uvic.ca](mailto:psichi@uvic.ca) or [familyc@uvic.ca](mailto:familyc@uvic.ca). Help us make the holidays a little less stressful for students with families.



### Write-on Dr. Esther Strauss!

The latest issue of the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* has a review of the 3rd edition of Strauss et al.'s *A Compendium of Neuropsychological Tests* (recently published by Cambridge) that absolutely gushes. It concludes, "[The goals of this edition] are surely met- beyond all expectations...Having a copy of the third edition of the Compendium at hand would help any of us 'know our tools' substantially better. A *Compendium of Neuropsychological Tests*, Third Edition is a mature work of outstanding scholarship, and it should find a place on every neuropsychologist's desk."

- Steve Lindsay reports

## Café Philosophy: Serving up food for thought in downtown Victoria

By Katie Winters

Every Wednesday evening regulars and rookies gather in downtown Victoria's Solstice Café to engage in a free flowing yet somewhat regulated dialogue about a philosophical concept. The discussion topics for each "season" are pre-selected through a classic exercise in democracy – popular vote. Anyone can put a topic up for vote, but only those that are attractive to the majority of people will make it to the proverbial round-table.

Some of the most recent winners are: Manipulation, Selflessness, Faithfulness and Enlightenment.

In the earlier days of Café Philosophy (1997), discussion topics were presented in the form of questions. For example, at the very first meeting attendees pondered, "What is Philosophy?" Other early questions included, "Is happiness worth it?", "What is the most pressing problem?", and "Is money a creative or destructive force in society?" At this time the topic selection process looked somewhat different than it does today, such that at the end of each meeting anyone could pose a question and once three questions had been suggested, the attendees voted on which one they were most interested in tackling the following week. Dr. Michael Picard, the creator and facilitator of Café Philosophy, admits that this method of selection meant that unfortunately some weeks the discussion question was just plain bad. In 2000, Dr. Picard decided to adopt the present form of topic selection in an attempt to move the Café's discussion style away from debate and towards a more comfortable and open dialogue. Anyone who has attended the Café recently can attest to his success on this front. In fact, civility and etiquette are more present at the Café than they are in most local grocery stores – a remarkable achievement when one considers the nature of the discourse.

So, you might be wondering, what it is like to attend an evening at Café Philosophy. Well, it is a lot like going to a potluck. Everyone brings something, and no one leaves empty. You don't have to like every dish that arrives, but you are promised the opportunity to try new things, and you will always leave much fuller than you had intended.

Everyone who attends the Café also has the option of subscribing to its e-mail list, which means that approximately two days before the event you receive an essay on the upcoming topic, written by Dr. Picard. Each essay is carefully constructed so that it includes the maximum number of vastly different slants on the topic, without sacrificing any sense of unity or flow. He works a similar magic during the Café, by subtly righting any discussion that starts to lean in one particular direction.

Unlike ancient philosophy discussion groups, the purpose of these forums is not to arrive at an answer, but rather to get people thinking about the topics. It takes philosophy out of the ivory tower and makes it publicly accessible. At the end of the night, there is no pressure to come up with answers, nor is there any pressure for people to agree. There is only the offer of a unique opportunity to learn and expand your mind without feeling like you have put any effort into the process. Attending a Wednesday evening at Café Philosophy is nothing like attending a lecture where one person and one person's ideas are in the spotlight; rather, it is a casual conversation where the spotlight seems to flow from person to person, so that by the end of the evening the entire room seems more illuminated.

However, if you attend an evening at the Café you will certainly notice much more than spotlight and opinions floating around the room – something considerably more powerful that can only be described as an "overwhelming sense of community". Café philosophy is a comfortable space where people can get out and interact in ways they typically would not and with people they typically do not. In fact, for many of the regulars, the appeal of the Café is as much social as it is intellectual. Granted the two are definitely complimentary and remarkably intertwined, as only in such a respectful and accepting social arena would we expect to find such fervent intellectual discussions taking place.

If you have not yet made it down to the Café, I strongly recommend that you go. After all, it isn't very often that something so satisfying and addictive is actually good for you!

**Join Café Philosophy at: Solstice Café, 529 Pandora Ave, Wednesdays, 7:30-9:15 PM**



There is a cover charge of \$4 (\$3 with student ID) plus purchase of one drink or menu item (to support our host café).

## Dr. Michael Picard – Founder of Café Philosophy

-Katie Winters

It would be difficult to discuss Café Philosophy without also making reference to its founder and moderator for the past 10 years, Dr. Michael Picard. Dr. Picard is an incredibly unique and engaging person whose diverse interests include Buddhist mediation, Jazz music, and Tai Chi. His professional background, no less eclectic, includes owning a philosophical counseling business, writing books on a variety of topics, and having a radio show devoted to philosophical discussions and interviews. He has also taught in several capacities at both the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University and is currently a Sessional instructor with the Department of Psychology at the University of Victoria.



Dr. Picard's affection for philosophy began as a teenager when he read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and found himself so engrossed that even the names of the famous philosophers mentioned in the book interested him. Soon after, he decided to study philosophy at the undergraduate level, and then later continued his formal education in the discipline with studies at the graduate level – ultimately receiving a Ph.D. in philosophy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1993.

In August of 1994, Dr. Picard moved to Victoria after receiving a job offer from the University of Victoria. He had only been living in the city for a couple of years when a friend who had read a newspaper article about the Philosophy Café in Paris suggested that he start one up here. It wasn't long before posters advertising Café Philosophy could be found on bulletin boards around town.

Dr. Picard admits that when he started the Café he was a bit nervous about how it would go; after all he was building it from scratch without any instructions or guidance. It's almost as if one person was commissioned to build a bridge and on top of being the designer, engineer, and architect, they had to take into consideration the needs of the people who would cross over it. Evidently he has been very successful, as 10 years later Café Philosophy is still going strong.



**Scenes from Café Philosophy**

**One Bowl Chocolate Cake** -from the *Hershey's Chocolate Lover's Cookbook*

Here's a recipe that I guarantee you can safely approach by first asking yourself two serious questions: *Do I have the time to do this? And can I pull it off?* This one is fast, easy, and good.

**Pre-heat oven to 350° F**

**Ingredients:**

- 2/3 cups butter or margarine, softened
- 1 ¾ cups sugar
- 2 cups all purpose flour
- ½ cup cocoa
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



Cake decorating by Aaron Brimacombe: ***Icing, smarties, gummy worms!***

**Method:**

Grease and flour 2 8- or 9-inch round baking pans or 1 13x9x2" baking pan. In large mixer bowl, beat butter and sugar until well-blended. Add remaining ingredients. Beat on low speed of electric mixer 1 minute, scraping bowl constantly. Beat on high speed 2 minutes, scraping bowl and beaters occasionally. Pour batter into prepared pans. Bake 30 – 35 minutes for round pans, 40-45 minutes for rectangular pan or until wooden pick inserted in centre comes out clean. Cool 10 min; remove from pans to wire racks. Cool completely. Frost as desired.

**December 14<sup>th</sup>**, the Department of Psychology Celebrates **D**rop-in

Enjoy food and drink in the Reading Room, 12:30 – 3 pm.

More detail to be provided as the date draws nearer!

**A**nd  
**V**isit

**E**xtravaganza



**WHAT DID YOU DO ON "SNOW DAY"?**

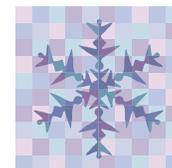
***"I did some Christmas Baking"***

**Lori-Ann Larsen**, Psychology Clinic Secretary



***"I took my 6 month old Daughter out for her first walk in the snow"***

**Chris Warren**, Graduate Student (Supervisor M. Masson)



***"I went for a walk in the snow"***

**Dana Liebermann**, Graduate Student (supervisor U. Mueller)