



GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

In keeping with the mission of the Philomathia Foundation, which is to “promote human harmony and well-being through advocacy for, and support of, education and research,” the Philomathia Foundation Graduate Fellowship was established at McMaster University in 2008.

A generous donation to the University, located in Hamilton, Ontario, will fund a total of six graduate fellowships valued at \$17,500 each – two per year for three years. The fellowships will be awarded to full-time graduate students who have demonstrated high academic achievement.

In each of the three years, one of the fellowships will be awarded to a graduate student in either the Faculty of Engineering or the Faculty of Science, and the other to a student in the Faculties of Business, Health Sciences, Humanities or Social Sciences.

These prestigious awards at McMaster will further the foundation’s goal of encouraging bright minds to explore and uncover new ideas and solutions in science, technology, the humanities and philosophy.

THE PHILOMATHIA TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

In 2009 the foundation established the Philomathia Travel Scholarship to promote learning and discovery from a global perspective. The \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded annually to a student who is enrolled in at least the third year of an Honours program with high academic standing and who wishes to study and travel abroad in order to expand his or her knowledge and perspective.

The award will be used for study and travel during the summer prior to the student’s final undergraduate fall/winter session.

CURRENT AND PAST RECIPIENTS OF THE PHILOMATHIA FOUNDATION GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP

GREG WIEBE

Greg Wiebe was awarded the Philomathia Foundation Graduate Fellowship for the current academic year (2009 – 2010).

Wiebe earned his B.A. in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and just recently completed his master's degree at McMaster University's Department of Religious Studies, within the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The Philomathia Foundation Graduate Fellowship allows Wiebe to further the research he initiated during his master's studies which deals with the intriguing topic of demonology. His current research focuses in particular on the writings and teachings of St. Augustine (354-430), considered to be one of the most important figures in the ancient western church.

The title of Wiebe's proposed dissertation is "Demons in the City: The Role of Demons in the Political Thought of Augustine and His Predecessors." He intends to provide a systematic account of Augustine's understanding of where demons come from, what their place is in the universe, and how they behave, all within the context of his development of an account of political virtue based upon the worship of God.

Wiebe acknowledges that the topic of demonology has attracted considerable attention in modern times, and is a prevalent theme in popular culture.

But to date, little academic work has been done on demons and demonology as perceived by Augustine and the scholars of his time. Through his intensive analyses of ancient texts, Wiebe intends to offer a way of interpreting the issue that is steeped in tradition, while still being relevant to the events and issues of today. For example, he will explore Augustine's theories on how the Romans' worship of demons is linked with the empire's downfall.

NICHOLAS HOLM



Nicholas Holm was awarded the Philomathia Foundation Graduate Fellowship for the academic year 2008 – 2009.

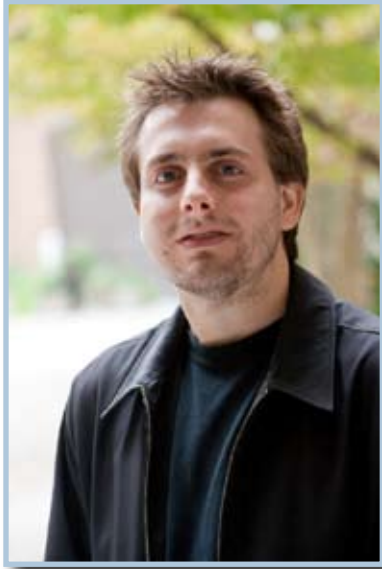
Holm, a McMaster University PhD student studying critical humour, examines the way humour operates in society to enable cultural, social and political discussions. Through an examination of popular examples of contemporary culture he seeks to consider what society finds funny, and what that reveals about attitudes and values. In particular, he addresses the way humour and laughter can be understood to inform fundamental notions of what it means to be human in the 21st century, and the sometimes troubling ways such notions function as key points of differentiation between liberal democracies and other societies.

Holm, who is also an award-winning humour writer, feels humour is central to our modern society in a historically novel manner. He believes humour has profound consequences for the ways we treat one another and the ideas of value that shape our lives. “By drawing connections between the way a community laughs and imagines its own political power and possibilities, my research seeks to contribute meaningfully to the wider discussion of the role of satire and humour within our contemporary political debate, while considering the ways disenfranchised groups negotiate the possibilities and pitfalls of our society of humour.”

Holm completed an undergraduate degree in Media Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Massey University in New Zealand. He also obtained a Bachelor of Arts with first class honours in Media Studies from Victoria University of Wellington, and a Master’s in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory from McMaster. He plans to graduate in August 2012.

“I have really appreciated the funding from the foundation,” he says. “As an international student from New Zealand, many funding paths are not always open to me. I very much appreciate the opportunity and what I regard as the charitable open-mindedness of the foundation which allows international students equal opportunity to receive and benefit from its generosity – they seem to honestly value that pure academic interest and curiosity. It’s something you don’t see very often these days.”

ALLAN BAYNTUN



Allan Bayntun was awarded the Philomathia Foundation Graduate Fellowship for the academic year 2008 – 2009.

Under the supervision of world-class physics and astronomy professor Cliff Burgess, Bayntun, a graduate physics student explores “string theory.” This field of study is a developing branch of theoretical physics that may allow for possible cosmological explanations of the beginning of the universe. As a high-energy theoretical physicist, Bayntun examines possibilities of both the beginning of the universe and current cosmological models using methods from extra dimensions. He also investigates the cosmic inflation hypothesis – that an extremely rapid, exponential expansion of the universe took place prior to the more gradual “Big Bang.”

Bayntun completed an undergraduate honours program in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at York University before coming to McMaster, where he obtained a Master’s in Physics. He is in his second year of PhD studies and expects to graduate in 2012 and pursue a career as an academic researcher. He is also a research member of the renowned Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo.

In addition to the Philomathia Foundation graduate scholarship, he has received several other awards for academic excellence, including two Ontario Graduate Scholarships, a scholarship from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and an Emeritus Professors Prize from York University.

After seeing Burgess conduct a lecture at York University, where Bayntun completed his undergraduate degree, he was convinced he wanted to study at McMaster, which he already felt had a strong reputation in low energy physics. “McMaster has a very strong physics department and Cliff really impressed me and was a primary motivator for me to wanting to study with him.”