

PLATO PERSIMMON

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August/September 2013

New PLATO Website: On Our Own

by Scott Kolar,
Communication and Membership

PLATO is a growing organization with increasing needs for communicating with our members. PLATO's Strategic Action Plan from 2010 established the goal of making PLATO's website "the medium of choice for the organization's communications." Until now, DCS has hosted and maintained a website for us, but it has become difficult for DCS to provide the increased level of service we would like. Consequently, this spring the Board of Directors decided to pursue building our own website.

A working group was established under the Communications and Membership Committee to develop the new website. The working group, which includes representatives from the Curriculum and Special Events Committees, has reviewed the current website and solicited desired changes from each Standing Committee. Based on their feedback we developed a list of requirements that has been approved by the Board of Directors, along with a budget line item for both the initial development and ongoing support of the new website. A local Web design firm has been selected and work on the site is well underway.

Initially the new website will look and function much like the current site. The main difference is we will have our own Web address (URL) and PLATO member volunteers will maintain and update the site. With our own URL, prospective members will find us more easily from Web searches. With our members maintaining the site, it will always be up-to-date. For the future we will have the capability to add functions as we need them. Those functions could include forums, blogs, audio, video, a photo gallery, and an online membership directory. These are exciting possibilities. However, we know a number of our members do not prefer to interact with the Web. Be assured we will continue communicating by mail and email.

The PLATO Fund: One Year and Counting

by Tim Otis, *PLATO Past President*

After more than a year in planning, the PLATO Fund was launched in April, 2012. This charitable fund is designed to support adult students with significant financial needs who are returning to college to finish their education. The fund is administered through the University of Wisconsin Foundation and coordinated with Continuing Studies at UW-Madison. This has allowed PLATO members, who donate, to receive a tax deduction for their donations.

For the past several years, PLATO has informally provided modest financial support from surpluses in the operating budget to support returning students with significant financial needs. By launching the PLATO Fund, the next steps have been taken, broadening our mission to officially include a charitable purpose and establishing a formal process that will hopefully grow, over time, our ability to provide increased support for this purpose.

During the first year of operation the PLATO Fund has been very successful. More than 12% of our members (see attached list of donors) contributed to the fund resulting in more than \$18,600 in donations. This spring PLATO provided \$6,000 to DCS to support scholarships for three returning students. (See attached short biography of each student.) The PLATO Fund is managed with these goals in mind:

- Administrative expenses will be kept minimal: all fund development efforts are carried out by PLATO volunteers; UW Foundation manages our fund and provides a guaranteed return on our endowment funds of 4.5%; DCS provides additional administrative support for no additional cost; and PLATO only incurs the direct costs of mailings and brochures (approximately \$1,000/year).
- A portion of annual donations will be kept in the endowment fund and the rest will go directly to support scholarships. With this plan we will grow the endowment fund to provide long term stability in supporting our purposes, while providing significant and increasing support each year to scholarship assistance.

During this past year, the efforts of two PLATO members have been particularly important in making the PLATO Fund a reality. These two are Marv Beatty and Fred Ross. Without their vision and hard work we could not have achieved the successful beginnings of the fund. Generations of returning adult students will benefit from their efforts.

This fall PLATO will send information about how you can support the Fund. Of course, the decision to participate is totally voluntary. However we hope you will consider supporting the important goal of providing scholarship assistance to returning adult students. continuingstudies.wisc.edu/seniorlearning/plato/donate.htm



With support from Continuing Studies at UW-Madison

President's Corner

by Patricia Becker, PLATO President



PLATO is into its 26th year, and as the articles in this issue of the *Persimmon* demonstrate, we are a vibrant group. Under the strong leadership of outgoing President Tim Otis, over the

past two years we have continued on a trajectory of increasing the number of courses and special events we offer.

PLATO began in 1987 with 39 members, six study groups, and an annual membership fee of \$15. We are now 940 strong, with 38 courses, a full menu of special events, and considering inflation and growth, a modest membership fee of \$60. We have 52 talented course coordinators and 35 dedicated committee members, plus the 12 Board members who also chair and serve on committees and task forces. Thus, we embark on the 2013-2014 fiscal year with a robust senior learning program delivered by a dedicated cadre of member volunteers, and implemented with the administrative support of the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) through our University Liaison, Professor Barry Orton, and mainstay DCS Administrative Assistant, Wendy Kerr. One consequence of our increasing numbers is that many of you may not be aware of how PLATO functions as an organization, and those of us doing the organizing may not be fully aware of your ideas and concerns. Thus, a major focus of the Board of Directors in this coming year is to make the workings of the organization more transparent to the membership by providing more venues for member feedback and involvement in policy decisions.

In response to questions about the need to raise dues, some of you gave us valuable feedback during the Pre-Luncheon Open Forum in May. A first step towards more transparency will be to make such forums a more regular feature. Also, we are embarking on creating a website that eventually will provide interactive opportunities. In the meantime, we want to be sure you are

aware that Board meetings are open meetings; we encourage you to attend to share your ideas and concerns. Meetings are held the third Friday of the month at DCS, 21 N. Park St., 7th floor (check with Wendy for time and place: plato-slp@dcs.wisc.edu). It is exciting to think of all the mental ferment and social energy being created in our 38 member-led courses, full panel of special events, and six active committees. And we are all volunteers—what a phenomenon PLATO is!

Serving PLATO

by T. Greg Bell, Communications and Membership Committee, Chair

The past two years have seen a number of PLATO members stepping down from serving the members in various leadership roles: on Standing Committees, as Course Coordinators and other leadership positions. Members who volunteer to serve in these various capacities are critically important to PLATO's operation, organization and function. The *Persimmon* is instituting a new feature titled "Serving PLATO" to recognize these people publicly and to record their service in the *Persimmon* for the historical record.

The PLATO Board and Standing Committees do recognize and appreciate the members who end their terms or end their service to PLATO. This column will simply list their names and the position they have recently completed serving. As these people end their service to PLATO we hope others will step forward and volunteer. An all-volunteer organization like PLATO needs many people to give just a little of their time to make PLATO successful for everyone. Won't you consider serving PLATO in the future?

Thank you for your valuable time serving our PLATO Membership. We can't do it without you!

PLATO Board of Directors—2013

Marv Beatty, Chair of Finance
Judy Sadowsky, Past President
Arden Trine, At Large

Curriculum Committee—2012

Peggy McEvelly, Active member

The Agora

Winifred Batson
Marv Beatty
Vaunceil Kruse
Claudia Melrose
Fred Ross

Course Coordinator—2011

Ved Prakash, Managing your Money
Fred Blancke, Travel; Continued Search for Meaning
Amy Ebert, Genealogy
Tom Penn, Jazz

Course Coordinator—2012

Vaunceil Kruse, Searching for Meaning, *The Agora*
Edna Canfield, Searching for Meaning, *The Agora*
Don Folberg, Roots of the Abrahamic Faiths, Qumran (Dead Sea) Scrolls
Mel Siedband, My Favorite Philosophers
Fred Paesel, Current Events in Depth with Kaffee Klatch
Stan Goldfarb, Great Books
Zorko Greblo, Biography

Course Coordinator—2013

Nancy Wynn, Chorus

Communication and Membership Committee—2013

Sharon Hirschfield, Active Member

Enjoying PLATO

This is a new column in the *Persimmon* featuring articles by members highlighting their enjoyment of PLATO! If you have something you have enjoyed about a particular PLATO activity or just the whole PLATO experience, feel free to share by sending an email to Patricia Herrling (*Persimmon* editor) at pjherlli@wisc.edu. We want current and prospective members to see what PLATO has to offer.

Contemplating the Wonder of the Universe: PLATO Cosmology

by Mary Madigan

If retirement is a time to indulge in the pleasures of the mind and enhance one's sense of wonder, what could possibly be better than a test-free, grade-free course in Cosmology? Judging by the comments of participants in the Spring PLATO "Cosmology" offering, the answer to that question apparently is: only a course

taught by UW-Madison Astronomy Prof. Sebastian Heinz. Prof. Heinz is a gifted teacher, with a talent for creating visualizations of concepts in physics and mathematics that make even relativity theory and quantum mechanics comprehensible. I'm not sure where he found the time and energy to add a PLATO class to his already very full plate of teaching and research, but I believe I speak for all class participants when I say, I'm so very glad he did.

Bravo to You All

by *Mona Wasow*

For many years I have taken quite a few PLATO classes and taught two: one on serious mental illnesses, and another on retirement issues. They have all been a deep pleasure. The teachers are knowledgeable, stimulating, and eager to encourage class participation. Participants have been equally as wonderful in their eagerness to learn and contribute. A good friend asked me about the class I just taught (along with Martha Phillips) on retirement. "Did you get to cover all the literature you had studied?" she asked me. I laughed, and said: "No way. The class members were so eager to participate, I could hardly get a word in edgewise!" And that is meant as a big compliment to the students! What a pleasure it is to be a PLATO participant, on both the giving and receiving ends. Bravo to you all.

A Critical History of the Catholic Church, taught by Tom Schlicht

by *Bill Ladewig*

As a "cradle Catholic" who progressed to being a "cafeteria Catholic" and then stood in various Catholic cafeteria lines, I found Tom's class one that tore the blinders off my mind's Catholic eye and left me wanting to know more. Using the DVD lecture format of Professor William Cook from the SUNY system, Tom used his own scholarship to guide us through the history of the ugly underbelly of the Catholic Church to find ultimate truths. Although the class may not be for the faint of faith or for those not willing to question their beliefs using Socratic teaching methods and questioning, it brought a great deal of insight (and comfort) to one already on that road. Rarely does a course shake one's religious

foundation in such a profound and illuminating way, and both Paula (Dáil) and I would recommend Tom's class, and his scholarship, to anyone who is intellectually open to the other side of religion.

PLATO Course News

by *Lauren Bough, Curriculum Co-Chair*

Fall 2013 Preview

Mark your calendars to save the date for the Fall Preview on Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2013 at the Madison Senior Center, 330 W. Mifflin St., from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. Frank Power and his assistants are gearing up for the event and planning an informative session for those who want to get more details about the courses scheduled for the Fall Semester. All Course Coordinators will make brief presentations on Sept. 18. This is especially helpful for the many attendees who have only been PLATO members for one or two years or who have yet to join the organization. It also is of interest to long-time members who want to hear about the new courses. You will also have the opportunity to meet the coordinators and ask them questions following the presentations. They will move upstairs to designated tables where they can be easily identified and approached. If the enclosed schedule indicates that pre-registration is required, you should contact the Coordinator directly via phone or email; don't wait for the Preview if there is a class size limit. The event will end with the ever popular social get together where you can reconnect or make first acquaintance with your fellow PLATO learners and adventurers. Non-members are welcome to attend. PLATO volunteers will be on hand with membership forms.

Fall 2013 Schedule of Courses

The Fall Schedule of PLATO courses is included with this *Persimmon* issue. You have two new fascinating options to keep in mind while organizing your fall calendar. In response to the popularity of Helen Aarli's "Art Museums," the Chazen has developed a class for PLATO members called "Discovering Art at the Chazen." Attendees will explore art in historical and social contexts and consider its influence over time. And speaking

of influential artists, Tim Otis has put together the framework for an in-depth investigation of Bob Dylan. Participants in "Bob Dylan: Portraits of the Artist" will delve into the research and make short presentations on his multifaceted life, music, poetry and philosophy. Lewis Bosworth will continue his summer "Seniors as Poets" writing course, so sharpen your pencils and exercise your imagination. After taking a spring breather, the following coordinators will return in September: Dennis Dresang, "Whither the Relations Between States and the Federal Government;" Kenneth Hindman, "The Poetry of Mary Oliver and Others;" Patricia Herrling and Abbie Loomis, "The Sacred Feminine," and Jan Fulwiler, "Science of Happiness." Also note that Mona Wasow's "Retirement in All Its Complexities" will move to Capitol Lakes this fall. Eastsiders have the opportunity to participate in Jean Taffs' "Moral and Political Issues" at Oakwood Prairie Ridge. Check the enclosed schedule for the details on all 39 of the intriguing discussion groups. The information will be posted on the PLATO website: www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/courses.htm.

Course Proposals for Winter Interim and Spring 2014

The Curriculum Committee invites proposals for new courses for the Winter Interim period and the Spring 2014 semester. In addition to the regular weekday 10-week semester schedule, PLATO has offered and is open to a variety of other options such as evenings, week-ends, and the shorter interim sessions. As long as the proposal suits the coordinator, participants, and the host site, it will be considered. Although the completed forms are due Oct. 1, 2013 for both Winter Interim and Spring offerings, we will accept proposals at any time. The Committee will work with the Coordinator to select a location and to schedule the course for the next semester. For more details and to print the form, see PLATO website at: www.seniorlearning.wisc.edu/plato/course_proposal.pdf. Contact the Curriculum Committee Co-chairs Lauren Blough at laurenblough@att.net or 249-0258, or Harold Green at harlgren@aol.com to ask questions or to get the proposal forms.

Focus: On Special Events

by Mary Boyd, Special Events Committee Past Chair

For those new to PLATO and for those who may know PLATO primarily through one or more courses from this past year, let me introduce you to the activities sponsored by PLATO's Special Events Committee. This committee supports existing PLATO events like the Previews and yearly Luncheon with hospitality and volunteers. During this past year we also helped the Board with its 25th Anniversary Celebration for PLATO in October, 2012. While hospitality and social events were the primary purpose of this committee in the past, this committee has broadened its focus in recent years.

Increased Number of Day Trips

An increasingly important purpose for the Special Events Committee is the organization and sponsorship of day-long bus trips and one-time lectures on topics of general interest. These events add to the opportunities for members. This has been an especially eventful year for both day trips and lectures. During the course of 2012-13, the Special Events Committee more than doubled the number of day trips it sponsored. Day trip events included: Old World Wisconsin, the Chicago Botanic Gardens, Chicago Art Institute (Picasso exhibit), and Milwaukee Art Museum (Art in Bloom exhibit). Closer to home we also visited exhibits at Chazen Art Museum in Madison. Thanks to committee member, Bob Blitzke.

Five theater trips also were included in our year-long schedule: *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Other Desert Cities*, and the musical, *The Jungle Book* at Chicago's Goodman Theater; *Jeeves in Bloom* at Milwaukee's Chamber Theater and *Sense and Sensibility* at that city's Rep Theater. Well over 500 people registered to attend these day trips. This past winter we also offered two lecture events at Oakwood West's auditorium, thanks to the efforts of committee member, Aleta Murray.

Day Trips: New Bus Access Points

Beginning with the August 7 trip, we will offer three convenient bus trip access locations across the greater Madison area:

- **West:** Covenant Presbyterian Church, corner of Segoe and Mineral Point Rds.
- **Central:** Capitol Lakes at 333 W. Main St (includes free parking in its top ramp for the day)
- **East:** East Towne Shopko, corner of Zeier Rd and East Towne Blvd, under the Shopko sign.

Boarding times will vary. Check bus trip announcements for more information. We hope this makes it easier for those of you who rely on public transportation to attend these events.

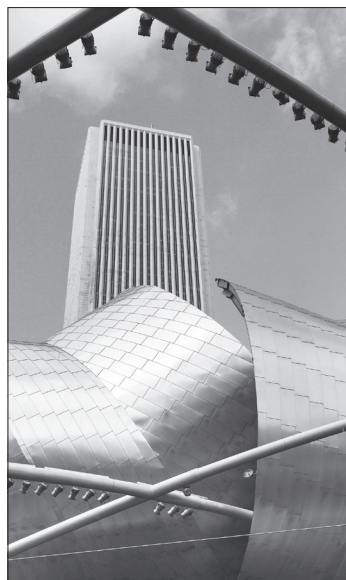
Lectures Coming Later in Fall

In addition to the above trips, a series of lectures will be announced later this fall. Watch the weekly email announcements for topics and locations. The special events committee has grown in size which has made the above opportunities possible. However, new members with new ideas and the energy to help us carry them out are always welcome. For more information contact new chairperson Bob Blitzke at bblitzke@charter.net or 271-7741.

Day trips Scheduled for late Summer and Fall, 2013

Aug 7	Impressionism, Fashion and Modernity	Art Institute of Chicago
Aug 22	Chihuly Venetians art glass exhibit and tour	Paine Art Center & Gardens, Oshkosh
Sept 10	Black Point Estate Tour and Cruise	Lake Geneva Cruise Line, Lake Geneva
Oct 2	<i>Ragtime</i> (the Musical)	Milwaukee Rep
Oct 17	<i>Pullman Porter Blues</i> (Live blues-infused theater)	Goodman Theater, Chicago
Nov 15	Fall Migration, Mississippi River Cruise	Lansing, Iowa
Dec 8	Waverly Consort's <i>The Christmas Story</i>	St. Joseph's Chapel, Milwaukee
Dec 11	<i>Noises Off</i> (spectacularly funny backstage farce)	Milwaukee Rep
Jan 29	<i>End of the Rainbow</i> (Judy Garland's 1968 comeback)	Milwaukee Rep

Registration information sent 6-12 weeks prior to event, depending on nature of event. Following first announcement, reminders are included in weekly email announcements.



Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Ill.



Annual All-Member PLATO Luncheon, May 22, 2013, at the Sheraton Madison Hotel, Madison, Wis. Photo by Mary Boyd.

PLATO Fund Scholarships For Returning Adult Students

2013 Recipients



Jafar Ahmed realized very early not only the value of education, but the importance of accessible and affordable health care, while growing up in Ethiopia. Watching neighbors and relatives die of infectious diseases due to lack of medication, Jafar dreamt of being a pharmacist and helping expand access to health care and medication. He's on his way now, studying pharmacology (making the dean's list three semesters in a row) and mentoring new students while he and his wife raise three children.



Not only does **Sagashus Levingston** aspire to become a college professor who teaches English literature, she's heavily invested in activism, policy and ethics, community building and supporting families. "Tying together all of these interests, here in Wisconsin, I have incorporated a nonprofit organization: The House of Sagacity, Inc.," she says. "The work that I do with my organization is the practical arm of the theoretical work I do as a teacher and researcher. From motherhood to teaching to research to activism, my goal is to serve through empowerment and education."



William Pennant's journey has been full of challenges. Having several younger siblings, William financed the last two years of college so his parents could help his younger brothers and sisters with their higher education. Spending time as a research fellow at the Children's Hospital in Seoul, Korea reinforced his desire to pursue a career as a physician-scientist, specifically as a pediatric neurosurgeon who conducts spinal cord injury and spinal cord tumor research. William co-leads the Neuroscience Interest Group at the medical school, and designed and organized the first UW Symposium on Functional Recovery following Neural Injury. As co-president of the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA), he has designed and organized a medical mission to Vietnam this summer.

Donate to the PLATO Fund

The Gift of Education—Helping PLATO Help Others

Your education has helped you in life, and now you can help the lives of others by donating to the PLATO Fund. The PLATO Fund has been established to help provide financial assistance to returning adult students at UW-Madison. Your tax-deductible donation to the PLATO Fund supports scholarships to deserving students as they pursue degrees at the UW. Help make a college degree possible for an individual who, because of financial circumstance, might be denied the gift of education. See the reverse side for information about the 2013 recipients of the PLATO Fund scholarships.

Make checks made payable to: *UW Foundation PLATO Fund* (12907458)

Mail to:

UW Foundation PLATO Fund
US Bank Lockbox
PO BOX 78807
Milwaukee, WI 53278-0807

Or, donate online via credit card at this Internet address:

<http://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/seniorlearning/plato/donate.htm>

Additional Ways to Give

The UW Foundation offers a variety of gift options you may wish to explore. Careful planning can maximize the positive effects of outright contributions such as cash, appreciated securities, life insurance policies, real estate, and gifts of personal property, as well as deferred gifts such as bequests, testamentary trusts and life income trusts. For more information, visit www.supportuw.org/making-a-gift or contact Ann Lippincott at 608-263-3604 or ann.lippincott@supportuw.org

PLATO Fund Donors

The PLATO Fund was established in April, 2012. Listed below are the names of PLATO members who have contributed through May, 2013. A total of 15 people donated to the fund. (Six donors were anonymous.)*

Abramson, Elliot & Rochelle
Arnold, Stephen & Margaret
Beatty, Ellouise & Marvin
Becker, Patricia
Berg, Jeffrey & Lynn
Berger, David & Barbara
Berkowitz, Leonard
Better, Maurice & Sybil
Blitzke, Robert K.
Blough, Lauren M.
Briggs, Michael & Norma
Bryce, Barbara & David
Bunger, Linda
Burger, Jeanne
Calden, Ruth
Campbell, Rebecca
Carstens, Laurine
Clum, James A.
Connors, Dean
Court, Franklin E.
Coyle, Sheila
Dail, Paula & Ladewig, Bill
Dewey, Bruce
Dilorio, Carla & Meryl
Drew, Sandra
Ellingson, Arlene
Falconer, Ann

Fessenden, Robert & Patricia
Filutowicz, Hanna
Finch, Peter
Fisher, Ellen
Flax, Bela
Foget, Kaj & Karen
Goldfarb, Stanley
Gomes, William & Kathleen
Gregg, Bruce & Marsha
Grogan, Jane F.
Johnston, Christine
Hagman, Ilene
Hecht, Rudolph C.
Joshi, Madhu & Sudha
Karn, Lois
Keiling, Sally
Kerndt, Miriam E.
King, Judith M.
Kolar, Scott A.
Kosmo, Susan
Lane, William
Loomis, Abigail A.
Lovejoy, Michael & Linda
Mason, Teresa
McCarthy, James & Joan
Merrill, Linda E.
Michaelis, Kathryn
Miller, Paul H.

Mish, Joan G.
Moore, James & Patricia
Morgan, Mary O.
Morrison, Kathryn
Nick, Mary
Oncken, Jennette
Otis, Tim
Paesel, Audrey & Fred
Pizer, Evan & Jane
Reeder, Carol & Don
Roberts, John
Ross, Frederic & Mary
Samson, Harland & Faye
Smart, John & Patricia
Stine, Margaret
Taylor, Judith A.
Test, Mary Ann
Trine, Arden
Thompson Rice, Margaret
Wadsworth, Doug
Walker Gill, Elizabeth
Wasow, Mona C.
Watson, Patricia A.
Weiler, Peter R.
Westring, David
Wilcox Zins, Mary
Winters, Conrad W.
Zuckerman, Alan & Marilyn

* *Please let me know if your name was not included.*

Tim Otis
tierneyotis@gmail.com