

Philosophy is defined as the use of logical argumentation and empirical data to arrive at truths about human existence. For Dr. M. Ashraf Adeel, though, philosophy is about more than just hard observation.

The Department Chair of Philosophy at Kutztown University, Dr. Adeel argues that underdetermination is important in researching any field of study. Based in his Ph.D. studies, Dr. Adeel published a book in 2010 about the concept. In his terms, underdetermination is when “logically different hypotheses” are found based on the same empirical data.

“We can come up with conflicting theories and hypotheses such that they are empirically equivalent—since the same data supports them—but logically incompatible with each other,” he says.

**“[Empathy is]...something that can be inculcated in us through more humane relationships.”**

Many people find underdetermination to be an issue in research practices, both within the field of philosophy and outside it. If the same data can result in different conclusions, then what is the true conclusion? Dr. Adeel thinks that there is a positive side to it.

“Ultimately, underdetermination is a part of our process of constructing theories,” he says. “I think that it is something that [is] ultimately a good thing, because it leads to diverse theories and hypotheses.”

While it’s important for students to study with multiple perspectives in mind to improve their understanding of concepts, Dr. Adeel points out that doing so also promotes one of life’s most important virtues: empathy. To him, empathy is the key to recognizing opposing philosophical viewpoints and understanding ideas that we might not have considered before.

One way that empathy can be applied to understanding a concept is through linguistic communication. The way a concept is presented through language can influence one’s understanding of that concept. For example, many students struggle to understand philosophical concepts explained through high-level philosophical terms and expressions. Dr. Adeel believes that by spending time with the language used to express a concept

one wants to understand, a deeper understanding of the concept is possible. “We try to analyze its form, semantics, [and] its application,” he says, “[which is] considered to be a gateway towards understanding the problems which are being formulated [through the language].”

With an empathetic attitude in mind regarding his own studies, Dr. Adeel found that experiencing art and literature helped him gain a deeper understanding of all areas of study. Poetry helped him understand many philosophical concepts. “My academic life started turning as I studied

## Dr. M. Ashraf Adeel | Philosophy Faculty Highlight

more and more philosophy,” he says. “Ever since my school days, I was interested in poetry, so I read a lot of [it]. While I don’t draw much distinction between the East and the West [regarding philosophical concepts], it appears to me that philosophy in the East is expressed very poetically.”

Regardless of what a student primarily studies, Dr. Adeel believes that viewing all concepts through lenses of poetry, literature, art, and other mediums can create a more holistic understanding of the concepts. To him, science and art, analytical and creative thinking, work together to formulate informed conclusions about existence. “Science and philosophy cannot be separated...from the deepest urges to get in contact with reality,” he says. Reality, to Dr. Adeel, is every way the universe expresses and balances itself.

Realizing that many valid perspectives exist creates not just a better understanding of concepts, but also individuals with a more holistic view of the world. Dr. Adeel believes that all students should learn to be empathetic in their studies. “[Empathy is] not something that you can teach as a science, but it is something that can be inculcated in us through more humane relationships with each other, and also through examples of great empathetic personalities,” he says.

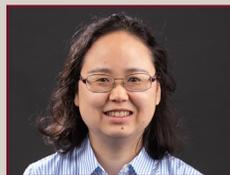
Dr. Adeel hopes to continue his work publishing both poetry and philosophical research while also continuing to teach, a profession that he says has helped share his empathetic nature with his students.

“It’s a great thing for me to be able to walk into classes and share my feelings, ideas, and thoughts with students on a regular basis, because they are my primary audience,” he says. “I hope my next poetry anthology and research work is useful for them.”

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## Meg Gooding | Psychology Student Highlight

When Kutztown University junior Meg Gooding listened to her grandmother speak about helping others through psychotherapy, she knew she wanted to make that her profession.

“For as long as I’ve known, I’ve wanted to be a therapist,” she says. “I didn’t always know what that was, but I knew I wanted to help people, and I knew I wanted to make people’s lives better.”

After visiting KU’s campus, she knew it was the place to pursue her bachelor’s degree in psychology. With minors in sociology and in women’s, gender, and sexuality studies, Gooding feels prepared to face graduate school.

“[Majoring in psychology is] not the only route, but it’s the most direct route to becoming a therapist.” She plans to gain her master’s degree to practice after she graduates in spring of 2023.

During her sophomore year at KU, Gooding realized that she didn’t have to wait that long to help people in need. She soon became involved on campus in a big way.

“I love being the Vice President of student government. That’s like my biggest [accomplishment] because that was never something I [ever] envisioned doing,” she says. “I just did it out of nowhere, and then winning inspired me to continue.” Student

government has allowed Gooding to take pride in her “political” nature, as she describes it.

As a member of student government and the Honors Program, Gooding works with students on an individual basis as a peer mentor. This can mean anything from answering questions students have, to helping them resolve issues, or to speaking with them about their own involvement on campus. “It makes me feel like I’m doing something [meaningful],” she says. She’s proud of the ability to make a difference in students’ lives.

Helping students was also helping Gooding with her own struggles. She says becoming involved with student government and the Honors Program helped her come out of her shell post-high school.

“I was super shy going into high school,” she says.

“I didn’t get involved, really. So I came to college...I wasn’t really involved freshman year, and that was probably my biggest issue. [I came] out of my shell my sophomore year. I got more involved than I had been previously.”

Finding purpose in engaging with KU groups came about in large part due to Gooding’s ability to help fellow students. Currently, she’s focusing on helping new students make the difficult transition back to campus from virtual learning due to COVID-19.

As a way to make students feel more comfortable in this transition, Gooding says that she and student government are, “trying to [promote] the tutoring center and the writing center—things like that that are support systems for students on campus,

that they can go to for help.” They do this through their social media presence and by spreading knowledge of these resources through peer mentoring. Gooding says she is currently in the process of gathering feedback from students to see the success level of her efforts so far.

Gooding’s desire to help others grew even more when one of her psychology professors showed her that a college education goes beyond the classroom. Dr. Mace showed her that learning is not defined by academic performance alone, but by knowledge and experience as well. “I always focused on the letter grade that I got...he taught me that what you learn [through experience] is more important,” she says.

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This led Gooding to realize the importance of putting in extra work, that taking a step beyond earning good grades goes a long way in a student’s success. Campus involvement, for her, is the best way to learn and prepare for the challenges life holds ahead. Her experience as a student worker for the Honors Program has helped her do just that. “[It’s] really fulfilling to me; it makes it all worth it,” she says. The gratification she gains from putting in extra work is something she hopes all students can experience.

While Gooding knew she wanted to help others when she started working towards becoming a therapist, her involvement at KU helped her see that there was more to it than acing her psychology classes. In giving advice to incoming students, Gooding says, “My biggest advice is to get involved. I know it’s stressful in the beginning because you don’t know anybody, but just joining something that interests you [really helps].” She encourages all new students to, “[Join] a club for your major and a club for your interests, so you [kind of get] a community of people you can talk to.”

Campus involvement helped Gooding to see beyond her notions regarding education. College, for her, transformed from a way to reach her career goals, to a learning and life experience she’ll carry with her into the future.

