



Blaine Fowers

Professor Honored by American Psychological Foundation

By Barbara Gutierrez
UM News

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (August, 29, 2016)—Blaine Fowers, a professor of educational and psychological studies in the School of Education and Human Development, has been awarded the Joseph B. Gittler Award from the American Psychological Foundation for his contributions to the philosophical foundations of psychology.

The annual award, which includes a \$7,500 honorarium, honors theoretical psychologists who question the basic assumptions most psychologists take for granted. Among them: whether it is possible to study human psychology in a value-neutral way, whether human psychology can be explained only in terms of causal forces, or whether humans have agency or choice. They also ponder whether humans are fundamentally separate individuals or initially social creatures who only later become individuals.

“The Gittler award is an honor to receive because it is the premier award given to recognize work on the philosophical foundations of psychology in North America,” said Fowers. “The importance of the award was indicated by its first two awardees, Jerome Bruner and Daniel Kahneman (who also won a Nobel Prize), two giants in psychology.”

The Gittler award was established through a bequest from Joseph Gittler, Ph.D., who wished to recognize psychologists who are making and will continue to make scholarly contributions to the philosophical foundations of psychological knowledge.

Isaac Prilleltensky, dean of the School of Education and Human Development, said Fowers’ work helps to illuminate fundamental assumptions underlying psychological thinking.

“His contributions reveal the culturally embedded nature of much psychological thinking and practice. If you want to be a better psychologist, or a better consumer of psychological theories and services, you have to understand the philosophical foundations of the discipline,” Prilleltensky said. “Fowers has helped psychologists

and the public at large to understand unquestioned assumptions about the profession, dealing mainly with biases towards individualism.”

Fowers joined the faculty in 1990 and served as the director of training for the doctoral program in counseling psychology from 1997 to 2005 and as department chair from 2005 to 2009. In his role as a teacher, Fowers provides instruction in character development and flourishing, research methods, the evolution of human social life, and preparation for academic careers.

He has an active research team of doctoral and undergraduate research assistants who are engaged in the interdisciplinary study of the virtues of kindness, fairness, and friendship. The author of two books, *The Evolution of Ethics, Virtue and Psychology* and *Beyond the Myth of Marital Happiness*, Fowers also coauthored *Re-envisioning Psychology* and the forthcoming *Human Frailty and Flourishing*. His scholarly interests center on the contributions of Aristotle’s ethics to a richer understanding of psychological theory, research, and practice.

Fowers received a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Texas at Austin. He served as an assistant professor at the University of New Mexico before coming to Miami.

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