

Sociology Update

UMSL * College of Arts and Sciences * Department of Sociology

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From the Department Chair, Chikako Usui

Greetings from the Department of Sociology at UMSL! As we close the 2006-07 academic year, I would like to congratulate our students, alumni, and the faculty for the successful year. The Department awarded **Sarah Anderson, Alison Ebers, Leslie Ecterhof, Debra Garcia, Michael Gibson, Jeffery Gomulinski, Kandra Holbrook, Lisa Newmark, Stephen Wohlgemuth, and Lenora Young** for their academic excellence. Two of our M.A. graduates, **Rachel Craft** and **Kathleen Kruger**, will be pursuing the Ph.D. degree in sociology. **Mary Ann Coker, Kelley Harris, and M.K. Stallings** will start teaching this fall. Please read more about them in this newsletter and wish them the best in their new careers.

I would also like to extend our warm welcome to **Amanda Porterfield** who joined us in May 2007 as Administrative Assistant. Amanda earned her B.F.A. in Film, Photography, & Visual Arts from Ithaca College and previously worked at Virginia Tech in the AHRN Information Technology department. I thank **Sara Baalman** and **Linda Benson** for their assistance in the Sociology office while we were seeking a regular administrative staff. Finally, I would like to thank the sociology alumni for their continuing support.

In the fall we will be joined by ten new graduate students. We will also resume our monthly pizza luncheon where current sociology students, alumni and the friends of the Department are all invited. Please come join us.

Undergraduate Research Symposium By Mary Ann Coker, Sociology B.A./M.A. 2007

This year's Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS) welcomed over 200 visitors including administrators, faculty, staff, students, family members of participants, and staff from University Public Relations. In addition to showing their support for all of the budding scholars, these visitors caught a glimpse of the dynamic research taking place within the undergraduate research culture at UM-St. Louis. Between noon and 3:00 p.m. on April 27, 2007, 45 undergraduate researchers presented their research in oral format. In addition, between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. another 45 undergraduate researchers presented in poster format. Whether presenting a poster or an oral presentation, the participants found a safe environment to practice speaking about their topic to an unfamiliar audience.



For the past two years, I have had the pleasure and honor of being the Chair of the URS, which is a Golden Key International Honour Society sponsored event. The URS started out with a small group of Pierre Laclède Honors students, who displayed their hand-created research posters in the main hallway of the Provincial House. Each year the committee strives to improve the quality of the URS and increase the quantity of participants. Over the past six years, it has grown into an event through which *all* students from the University of Missouri-St. Louis can present their research in poster and oral formats just as they would in a professional conference.

In addition to improving the overall quality of the URS, one of my goals as chair was to utilize technology to improve the Intent To Participate (ITP) and Application process. Another goal was to improve our website. Although I am a computer geek at heart, over the years I have learned that a good leader knows they have limitations. Thanks to the hard work of the ITS department, 2006-2007 participants were able to fill out their ITP and Application on line, and even make changes to them up to the deadline. Thanks to Dr. Kathryn Walterscheid, the URS Faculty Advisor and Tanika Busch, the web mistress for the College of Arts and Sciences, the URS now has a great new website. I encourage you to check it out at <http://www.umsl.edu/divisions/artscience/uresearch/URS.html>.

The Symposium Experience

Beth Murphy participated in the 2007 Undergraduate Research Symposium. Her presentation, "The United States Immigration Debate," compared illegal immigration policies at local, state, and federal levels. Beth developed her paper in SOC 4380 Special Topics in Social Policy taught by Dr. Chikako Usui in Fall 2006 and expanded her analysis in Winter 2007. Preparing for the event provided Beth with invaluable experience; she had to meet deadlines, stay organized, and – the hardest part – scale down forty pages of research into a 300 word paragraph. Though she was unable to fully cover her research within the fifteen-minute time limit, Beth received an excellent score from the official who listened to her presentation. "This process has honestly been the most difficult task I have had to complete in my scholastic career," she says. "Anyone graduating from UMSL should make this a part of his or her college experience."

News on the Sociology Curriculum

SOCIOL 4380: Sociology of Disasters and Homeland Security (Larry Irons)

First offered in Winter Semester 2007, the course provides a social perspective on catastrophic events, high-risk technologies, and homeland security policies. We recommend it to those interested in law enforcement or research on U.S. vulnerabilities, disasters, and security. Upon successful completion of the course materials (including the interactive simulations), the students in SOCIOL 4380 will receive a **certificate of completion for the Homeland Security course**.

What do students think of SOCIOL 4380?:

"This is not a conventional course. Highly recommended."

"Subject matter is real world/real time applicable."

"It is relevant to current events."

"I liked the online simulation."

"I think the knowledge will help in the future."

"Very interesting. I learned a lot in this class."



Department of Homeland Security National Operations Center (courtesy www.dhs.gov)

Dr. **Larry Irons** is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology. He has extensive experience in designing and developing online learning programs for a Masters Degree in homeland security policy offered at the Naval Postgraduate School. Since 2005, his work has consisted of *intelligence analysis* posted daily in the Open Source Daily Brief Archive at the Institute for Preventive Strategies, which offers various certificate programs to professionals in law enforcement, the fire service, and emergency management. Dr. Irons is also a co-author of [Catastrophe Preparation and Prevention for Law Enforcement Professionals](#) (McGraw-Hill, 2006), a prevention textbook used in the Center for Homeland Defense & Security curriculum at the Naval Postgraduate School. He is also a co-author of [Catastrophe Preparation and Prevention for Fire Service Professionals](#) (McGraw-Hill, forthcoming).

Sociology in the Military

Did you know that sociological skills were used in the capture of Saddam Hussein?

"It is apparent that a requirement of today's battlefield is to make an assessment of the political and social architecture of the operating environment. To successfully accomplish this requires more than a reading of field manuals, but also an understanding of the local culture, political history, and the basics of managing a successful government. It is my belief that an understanding of the basics of sociological concepts- for example, justice and balance theory, exchange theory, and social networks- could potentially serve as a combat multiplier and therefore be the difference between success and failure." –Major Brian J. Reed

Operation Red Dawn

Major Brian J. Reed, stationed in Iraq from March 2003 to March 2004, was instrumental in planning the capture of Saddam Hussein. As the Operations Officer for his Brigade, Major Reed was the primary planner for Operation Red Dawn, the military operation that resulted in apprehending Hussein. He reports using sociological skills—a layered social network analysis to locate Hussein prior to his capture.

For a number of years, Major Reed, a graduate of West Point Military Academy, currently a Ph.D. student in the Sociology Department at the University of Maryland-College Park and a part of the University of Maryland's Center for Research on Military Organization (CRMO), has advocated sociological training for all military officers.

Sociological Imagination

According to Reed, by applying basic sociological principles he and other military personnel were better able to understand the Iraqi culture.

"Junior officers should apply sociological imagination to see an operations' larger social operating network and respond appropriately to their missions," (Efflandt and Reed 2001). Reed recalls how his sociological training helped him become more culturally aware of Iraqi customs, with important practical implications. Reed said that in the same way various armed services develop new weapons, ships, and other technologies, he and others in the military are committed to finding increasingly sophisticated ways of understanding the social structures and cultures of those they are tasked to fight.

In a 2001 article, Maj. Scott Efflandt and Reed argued, "For those leaders at the tip of the spear, an academic grounding in sociology may be the most efficient and useful collegiate specialization..." They believe that with sociological grounding, "[Officers'] decisions and actions on future battlefields reflect deliberate thought and understanding of larger social and political relationships."

(The original article was written by Victoria Hougham and was published in ASA Footnotes, July/Aug 2005.)

Congratulations!!!

May 2007 Graduates

Bachelor of Arts

Mary Ann Coker
Michelle Doyle
Casey Evans
Jeffrey Gomulinski

Master of Arts

Mary Ann Coker
Romell McElroy



Bachelor of Science

Sarah Anderson
Jozo Barac
Matthew Dickinson
Kandra Holbrook
Brande Johnson
Romeze Lawson
Michael Mulchek



Sociology Minors

Brandon Banister
Don Berry, Jr.
Daniel Herina
Francis Lam
Christopher Mabie
Lisa Newmark
Melissa Royster

Words from a Winner:

I chose the field of Sociology as my major because I currently work in that area of expertise and because I enjoy learning and studying the aspects of people. I am fascinated by how much I didn't know about the social world as a whole. I now think "outside the box" when it comes to other people and other cultures. I hope to acquire my degree and move on to a higher position in the social service sector.

– Lenora Young,
Freshman Sociology Award

Sociology Student Awards 2007

Ray Collins Alumni Award

Kandra Holbrook

Honors Program Student Association Awards

Sarah Anderson
Alison Ebers
Jeffery Gomulinski

Alumni Agent Scholarship

Debra Garcia

Sociology Alumni Scholarship

Stephen Wohlgemuth

Sociology Department Scholarship

Michael Gibson

Freshman Sociology Award

Lenora Young

Outstanding Junior Sociology Major

Leslie Echterhof

Outstanding Sociology Minor

Lisa Newmark

August 2007 Graduates

Bachelor of Arts

Eldon Thompson

Master of Arts

Rachel Craft
Aaron Dickey
Kelley Harris
Kathleen Krueger

Bachelor of Science

Alison Ebers
Tara Harris
Lori Roeder



Sociology Minors

Chad Cognac
Aubry Hollingsworth
Victoria Michel
Eleanor Taylor

„ Rachel Craft, Kelley Harris, and Kathleen Krueger are the winners of this year's Outstanding TA Award in Sociology. The Graduate School and the Center for Teaching & Learning will recognize their accomplishments at the closing ceremony of this year's TA Professional Development Conference, August 16 from 3-4 p.m. in the MSC. „

„ Kelley Harris has been selected as the Student Marshal of the Graduate School for the August Commencement Ceremonies. The Student Marshal carries the Graduate School banner and leads the Masters students in the academic procession. „

Graduate Futures: Where will they go next?

Mary Ann Coker will be teaching Introduction to Sociology at St. Louis Community College-Meramec and South County Campuses

Rachel Craft will pursue her Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Kansas.

Kelley Harris will be teaching Introductory Sociology at Southwestern Illinois College.

Kathleen Krueger will pursue her Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Alumni Notes

Jessica Closser Bland former Sociology Office Assistant and M.A. Museum Studies (2002) is working as a librarian for Otsuka Pharmaceuticals, a Japanese drug company with an office in Maryland. She and husband Les have a one-year-old son. We wish Jessica continued success in all she does!

Les Bland M.A. Sociology (2002) is working on a book about issues affecting museums, including education and entertainment, social status, and "Americanization of the Holocaust." Though much of his time is devoted to caring for his one-year-old son, he also performs occasional research assistant work from home. He previously worked as a Program Analyst for the Highway and Motor Carrier Program Office, Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Good luck with the book, Les!

Congratulations to Jessica and Les on the addition to their family!

M.K. Stallings M.A. Sociology (2006) will be teaching sociology courses at Saint Louis University this Fall.



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www.umsl.edu/divisions/artscience/sociology

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Managing Editor: Amanda Porterfield

Join Our E-mail List!

Please e-mail porterfielda@umsl.edu with your name and e-mail address. You will be notified of upcoming Sociology Department events.

We are grateful to all those who gave gifts of cash to the Department of Sociology.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Sociology Faculty News

Linda Benson was a featured speaker at the *Exploring the Wal-Mart Model* conference held at UMSL on April 18, 2007. Afterwards, many evaluations cited Professor Benson as one of the highlights of the conference. Great job, Professor Benson!

Robert Keel has been promoted from Senior Lecturer to **Teaching Professor**. Professor Keel has taught in the Sociology Department since 1994. His innovative approaches and his "virtual sociology" have touched students and professionals worldwide. In addition, Professor Keel has been actively involved in research on new learning models and communication tools as well as the impact of such a changing teaching environment. Congratulations, Professor Keel!

Following on her recent publication ("The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequences") in *Critical Sociology*, Dr. **Teresa Guess** is working on her manuscript on white collar crimes. This past academic year, Dr. Guess was invited to teach Introduction to Sociology to the Vashon High School program at UMSL, which began in 2006.

Dr. **George McCall** just returned to St. Louis from South Africa where he conducted a study examining how the treatment of tuberculosis among the Bushmen of eastern Namibia is handled. Bushmen are an indigenous population of the Kalahari Desert. He is still in the midst of unpacking and we look forward to hearing more about his field research in the next edition of Sociology Update.

Dr. **Nancy Shields** has completed her one-year sabbatical leave during which time she concentrated her energy on her research of community violence in South Africa and the U.S. Her long-range goals are to identify factors that mediate and moderate the relationship between exposure to violence and psychological distress and to develop intervention. The initial stage of her research was funded by the University of Missouri South Africa Education Program and UM Research Award Fund. Dr. Shields' most recent publication includes a chapter entitled "Controversial Issues Related to Teen Pregnancy: A Feminist Perspective" (co-authored with Lois Pierce) in [Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood: Global Perspectives, Issues and Interventions](#) (Routledge, 2006).

Dr. **Chikako Usui** is currently finishing her article on a comparative analysis of family and child care policies in the U.S. and Japan. She has also been involved in research on global competitiveness of firms and job commitment. In January, she was a featured speaker in Management and Leadership Symposium at Toyo University in Tokyo. Working with the Center for International Studies, she also organized a Toyo-UMSL Symposium on Global Corporate Competitiveness in March. Her most recent publication is "Asian Sociology" which appeared in [The Handbook of 21st Century Sociology](#) (Volume I, Sage Publication, pp. 60-68, 2007). We will hear more about the divergent development paths of sociology in China and Japan from Dr. Usui in a future edition of Sociology Update.
