

SocioNews

A Biannual Newsletter from
The Sociology & Anthropology Department

The College of New Jersey

New Developments in the Sociology Department Provide Opportunities for Students By Sarah Michlik

As the new Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology department, Diane Bates has been a very busy bee indeed. Having taught courses at The College of New Jersey for a few years now and being just recently appointed chair of the department, Dr. Bates has high hopes for the new developments and directions she and her colleagues have brought to execution. In my interview with her, she indicated that recent activities have been very productive and that in her short time as chair there have been some long-awaited and eventful developments. All of these changes are extremely promising for rising scholars in the disciplines and Dr. Bates foresees a bright future for the department.

In their desire to expand the reaches of the anthropology courses offered at The College, the department has hired a new anthropology professor who is slated to teach an Introduction to Physical Anthropology course in the coming semester. The approval for this course, as well as a topics course in Hunting and Gathering and the finalization of a Senior Thesis program, are all just small pieces of what has been brewing in the department. Along the same lines, the department also plans to seek to renew a one-year position to teach some anthropology courses to begin in Fall 2009. Hoping to build the anthropological discipline even further, they seek a professor with

background in medical and/or physical anthropology to support a minor in Public Health and offer courses like Epidemiology and Global Public Health.

Modestly, Dr. Bates admits that much of what has newly emerged from the hard collaborative work of the department is mostly to the credit of Dr. Rachel Adler, the former department chair. For the past three years, Dr. Adler had been developing the plans for the brand new concentrations for sociology majors, those now including health and environment and non-profit and community development as well as urban and ethnic studies. Also Dr. Rebecca Li, as chair of the Curriculum Committee, has been investigating a new honors program for majors but much more work is needed before this idea can be implemented in the department.

Over all, Dr. Bates explained that the direction of the department under her leadership will focus on scholarly development and community involvement. Through these new concentrations and developments within the major, she and her colleagues seek to provide more opportunities for hands-on, community-based research. In conjunction with the College's Bonner program and through disciplinary contacts with community leaders, the intended

Continued on Page 2

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Inside this issue:

Social Work in Real Practice	2
A Cultural Immersion Experience	3
Cohabitation	4
Welcome Dr. DelPrete	5
Observations from a Non-Traditional Student	5
Future Students of the Sociology Department	6
How Sociology Made Me a Humanitarian	7

result is to produce sociologists who are familiar with the implementation of what is taught in the classroom and produce the connections students make in the process. The perfect example is Sociology major Jessica Godofsky, whose concentration in environmental sociology has led to deep involvement with the New Jersey Brownfield Redevelopment Program. The growing reputation of sociology scholars who involve themselves outside the classroom in local communities is only expanding the opportunities for future majors. Dr. Bates expresses that the desired result of the expansion of concentrations in the department is to increase the number of real-world resources that students have access to and to forge connections to the communities where graduates will be applying their knowledge.

As for how being the Chair has been working out for her, Dr. Bates asserts that it has been interesting to become a part of a bureaucratic system when one spent so much time studying it as a sociologist. She explained that her position is somewhat unique for a sociologist and in many ways strange, but she is enjoying the experience and is learning as she goes. However she insists

that not much has changed in the department since her appointment. The focus has been very student-oriented from the beginning and efforts genuinely seek to provide the best opportunities for scholars. She is simply continuing Dr. Adler's work in developing connections to the community and maintaining the democratic, collaborative efforts of all of her colleagues in the department.

Some advice for aspiring sociologists from Dr. Bates is to take advantage of all the hard work she and her colleagues have put into expanding student opportunities and to focus on research and methods. The sociology departments' methods course is designed to be more rigorous than most for just this purpose and is meant to promote a sophisticated understanding of the sociological methods of research. She encourages students to experiment with non-traditional learning experiences and primary data collection including field research. Dr. Bates' work as the new chair, in conjunction with her colleagues in the department and previous efforts, aim to, as they already have, provide the fertile ground for young minds to blossom, and will continue to do so under her leadership.

Social Work in Real Practice By Erica Jungels

Here at The College of New Jersey, students learn the skills and abilities needed to advance in careers and in life. But reading a textbook is not the only way to learn. A great way to acquire new skills and gain knowledge is through an internship, which integrates the classroom into the workplace. I am currently a junior sociology major and I plan to go to graduate school to obtain my masters in social work (MSW). Many skills that social workers use are often difficult to learn in a classroom, but with practice, these skills can be developed and built upon.

This semester I am doing an internship at Somerset Medical Center Hospital. At the hospital, I am a discharge planning assistant. When a patient is discharged from a hospital, it is the social worker's job to ensure that all of their needs are addressed both before and after they leave the hospital. The social worker makes sure that the



patient has a safe place to return to, that they have access to medications and proper medical equipment at home.

Whether a patient is discharged to their home or to a special care facility, a social worker tries to ensure that the patient has the social support needed to help them recover. Working at the hospital, I have gained a better understanding of the different resources needed and available to people with various problems.

At my internship, I have been able to apply what I have learned in my sociology classes to a real world setting. With hands on practice, I can develop even more the skills that I learn in class. With the opportunity to speak to patients, I have learned the importance of being an effective listener. Through watching the social workers carry out their duties, I have begun to understand the best way to interact with a patient and appropriate ways to deal with

Continued on Page 3

their problems. I have learned that I am not just there for the patient but I am also there for the family. Most importantly, I understand the importance of the ecological model by examining all aspects of the patient's life, not just their medical condition. These are all things that I have been taught in class. I was

taught skills to help me be an effective listener and to take an ecological approach when dealing with a person. Through my internship, I have enhanced these skills and increased my capabilities to enable me to become a social worker.

A Cultural Immersion Experience: Gallaudet University By Nicole Lavender

Students here at The College can oftentimes be found researching study abroad options, attending interest sessions, and speaking with



upperclassmen about their experiences in foreign countries. For a sociology student engaged in such conversation, the term *cultural immersion* probably begins to surface. Regardless of one's major, studying abroad always results in some degree of cultural immersion. This past spring, senior Sociology and Deaf Education major Christy Myhren, had the opportunity to "study abroad" and become totally immersed in a subculture of our own society. Christy spent January through May 2008 in Washington D.C. at the country's only university specifically designed to accommodate the deaf and hard of hearing student population, Gallaudet University.

Christy initially became interested in studying at Gallaudet for the semester when she realized that to become a Teacher of the Deaf she would need to be fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), learn more about the Bilingual-Bicultural educational philosophy, and gain a better understanding of Deaf culture and the Deaf world. A semester at Gallaudet would provide Christy with endless opportunities for developing not only her skills but also her understandings, and even further, her beliefs. As a result, Christy began the application process and before she knew it was entering the door to her first course at Gallaudet.

The course was titled "Introduction to Deaf Studies" and reflecting on the experience, Christy says, "I entered the class, sat down, and listened with my eyes. I hardly understood the teacher's signs, but one thing I did realize. She assigned a journal entry for homework. The topic? 'Your experience growing

up deaf.'" Upon the completion of class Christy approached the professor and asked, "So, I'm hearing, what do I do for homework?" For the assignment, Christy wrote about her reasons for coming to Gallaudet as a visiting student and her interest in learning ASL. This initial class and assignment started Christy on a journey that resulted in a fantastic cultural immersion experience.

Christy's typical routine consisted of attending classes taught by Deaf professors (among the courses she took were Children's Literature, Space and Astronomy, and Creative Movement for Kindergarten), participating in a book club, working as a teacher's aide at the university's Child Development Center, and hanging out with friends. In each role-student, teacher, friend-Christy reports her feelings of being the minority and the struggles she faced as she came to learn acceptable cultural norms. Christy says, "Though I was in America, I felt like I was in a whole different country where I needed to learn the acceptable behavior. Though I was certainly challenged at Gallaudet, I loved and enjoyed it. My eyes were opened to the world around me and I felt so honored to be given a view into the Deaf world."

Immersion into Deaf Culture requires a solid understanding of the community's language, beliefs, and social norms. Deaf individuals see themselves as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, rather than as a group possessing a hearing disability. To become immersed in such a culture was an extremely nerve-racking, yet eye-opening and enriching experience for Christy. When asked about the most important thing she learned, Christy responded, "I learned most of all just what I.

Continued on Page 4

King Jordan, the first deaf president of Gallaudet, stated: ‘Deaf people can do anything that hearing people can do, except hear!’ Hearing people and deaf people are both people with the same abilities, hopes,

and dreams. They only differ by culture and language.”

Cohabitation...Common Questions and Misconceptions By Amalia Yakobovich



When it comes to relationships and living arrangements, there exist many myths, opinions, and questions about cohabitation. There are varying opinions of cohabitation, and current sociologists describe this living arrangement as reshaping American families. Although not every trend, rule, or answer below applies to every couple, it is important to consider the facts when making the decision to cohabit.

Question 3: Who cohabits?

There is much diversity among those who cohabit. However, there do exist patterns in age, race, and other traits of cohabitants. A majority of cohabitants are between the ages of 25 and 44. Although many people believe college-age students are the largest group of cohabitants, only 20% of all cohabitants are 24 years of age or younger. The highest rates of cohabitation occur among American Indians and Native Alaskans, while the lowest are seen among Asian Americans. Cohabitation is more common among people of lower educational and income levels. About 75% of cohabitants claim that money problems are the only cause of their delaying marriage.

Question 4: What are some statistics about cohabitation?

Question 1: What is cohabitation?

Cohabitation is a living arrangement in which two unrelated individuals live together and usually have a sexual relationship, but are not married. It is commonly referred to as “shacking up.”

Question 2: Why do people cohabit?

There are many reasons a couple can choose to cohabit. The most common reasons for cohabitation include convenience, testing the relationship before making a long-term commitment, wanting to try out what married life might be like, or substituting long-term cohabitation for marriage.

- The number of heterosexual unmarried couples in America has risen from less than half a million in 1960 to over five million in 2005.
- About half of cohabiting relationships end within one year; over 90% are over by the fifth year.
- By the age of 30, half of all U.S. women have cohabited.
- Compared with married couples, cohabitants have weaker commitments to their relationships, lower levels of happiness and satisfaction, and are more likely to be unfaithful.
- Couples who cohabit before marriage have higher divorce rates than those who do not.

Welcome Our New Anthropology Professor: Dr. DelPetre By Johanna Soto

The Sociology and Anthropology Department has a new faculty member, Dr. Hilary DelPrete. She is keeping anthropology alive in the department for she is the only member teaching anthropology courses for the semesters of Fall 2008 and Spring 2009.

Dr. DelPrete, originally from Illinois, received her Bachelors of Science in Anthropology at Tulane University. She then continued her education at Rutgers University- New Brunswick, where she obtained her masters and doctorate in anthropology. Her forte is biological anthropology, therefore, for her dissertation, she studied the secular changes of pelvic bone over the last 200 years in order to understand what information they could tell about human evolution.

She has been teaching at the professor level for four years and enjoys teaching anthropology, because she usually has students without any familiarity in the subject. She states her interests are a

result of the fact that when students learn what anthropology entails they are able to apply it to their lives.

Dr. DelPrete's first semester at TCNJ has gone wonderfully because the students are hard working, motivated and interested in the material. One of the reasons she came to TCNJ was because she heard wonderful remarks about the students and the academic environment. In addition, she is excited about being part of a growing Anthropology department.

Make sure to check out one of her classes next semester. The classes she will be teaching are Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Hunters and Gatherers, and Physical Anthropology. In the near future, she hopes to see more classes offered in the subfield of Biological Anthropology.

Education as a Process of Living- Observations from a Non-Traditional Student By Bonnie Friedman

Returning student, mature student, adult learner, non-traditional student – these are just a few labels used to identify undergraduate students who are older than the typical college student (18-25) and have had a significant gap in their studies. I am proud to claim membership in this growing population, one that consists of as much as 47 percent of new and returning college students, according to the Association for Nontraditional Students in Higher Education (Morrison, 2008). At forty-four years old, I have over twenty years of work remaining before I retire, and like many returning students, I am a single mother who works full-time.

After achieving some success in a field that didn't require a degree, but feeling unsatisfied I embarked on my educational odyssey seeking personal and professional enrichment. According to Lumina Foundation for Education (Pusser, Breneman, Gansneder, Kohl, Levin, Milam and



Turner, 2007), I am one of the nation's fifty-four million laborers who lack a college degree. Considering the competitive global economy and the revolutionary rate of technological change, educating adult learners is vital to our nation's sustainability in the global marketplace. Yet despite the vital role we play, adult learners are widely ignored by postsecondary institutions. "Millions of adult students are seeking degrees in a system built largely for – and around – traditional students" (p.3).

My experience as an adult learner at TCNJ has been a challenge. I selected TCNJ for pragmatic reasons – convenient location between work and home, and quality of program studies. Like many returning students, my employer is funding my education. However, TCNJ will not accept a promissory note from

Continued on Page 6

the employer making upfront loans necessary. TCNJ's four credit courses have made partial aid easier to obtain; I can take two classes and still qualify, but the inability to access partial aid is a huge obstacle for many returning students.

Two of my greatest challenges at TCNJ have been the lack of guidance in degree mapping and the limited availability of evening, weekend and hybrid courses. Summer curriculum options have been extremely limited as well. While most professors have been accommodating, college policy does not facilitate missed class due to family or work obligations, nor do they provide alternate options to mandatory internships. I am proud to be a student at

TCNJ, holding a 3.6 GPA in one of the most competitive colleges in the region. I plan to attend graduate school and aspire to advance social policy. "Adult learners can support the nation's efforts to increase global competitiveness, but they need the support of their national institutions" (Pusser et al; 2007). Building flexibility into TCNJ's curriculum would attract adult learners, enhance campus diversity, and enrich each individual's learning experience while contributing to the promise of a college educated citizenry.

Future Students of the TCNJ Sociology Department

By Lisa Esposito

I am sure you can all remember the stress and anxiousness you felt when first stepping foot onto The College of New Jersey campus. After being greeted by people jumping up and down in blue and white striped shirts, you were given a schedule of where to be, at what time, and what to do. In those few hours you were provided with a plethora of information and your head was probably spinning and full of questions. On October 26, I had the opportunity to work along side Dr. Howard Robby and fellow student Sara Michlik at the sociology table of a TCNJ open house. Together we answered the endless questions from curious students and concerned parents.

The most frequently asked question by students and parents alike was, "What can you do with a sociology degree?" One of the beauties of sociology is that it can be incorporated into almost anything: Business, criminal justice, education, international studies, healthcare...you name it, sociology encompasses it. Many of the students did not know exactly what they wanted to do in the future, so when they heard this it was music to their ears. Other students were also questioning the differences between sociology and psychology.

Fortunately, once we explained that sociology deals with the big picture (social interaction and the hows and whys of society) the students realized they were standing at the right table.

The students also seemed to express a lot of interest in the three concentrations sociology offers, especially health and environment. This is an up and coming issue that is important worldwide, so seeing the enthusiasm in the prospective students was definitely an indication that our curriculum is headed in the right direction. Several students asked whether it was possible to pick up a second major or minor. Luckily for them, the sociology program is super flexible and offers plenty of elective space.

For every high school student I asked, TCNJ was their top choice of college to attend. They were all eager to learn about what we have to offer and their nerves were calmed once they understood how the sociology department works. Overall, the sociology table attracted an impressive number of potential students. It appears that this department has a lot to look forward to!

How Sociology Made Me a Humanitarian By Kaitlyn McMahon



When I came to The College in August of 2006, I was a much different person than I am today. Arriving as a political science major, I aspired to be a lawyer. My politics were slightly right of the middle, and my upbringing painted my views on everything. I had no concept of poverty or why social welfare programs were important, and I didn't particularly think that the government should take taxpayers' money to help the poor. I'm almost ashamed to admit those things now. Standing on the precipice of what may be a lifetime of social service, it's hard to think of myself two long years ago (a lifetime in personal growth) and how little I cared about those less fortunate than I. What an "every man for himself" mentality I had.

After my first semester, I realized neither political science nor a career in law were right for me. I have been so blessed, so fortunate in the opportunities I've been afforded, and I decided that I wanted to enter a career where I could serve others. I wanted to find something where I could be helping people every day, a job that would allow me to truly make a difference in the lives of others on a regular basis. Following a slight existential crisis and some help from Career Services, I changed my major to Sociology. The study of human interaction – that sounded pretty interesting, and promising in its related career paths.

I had no idea how drastically studying sociology would change my outlook. Working an hourly position at a supermarket, Dr. Li's voice popped into my head, discussing Marx and trading labor and human capital for wages. Whenever I hear someone discussing cohabitation before

marriage, I think of Dr. Galloway's lessons concerning the lack of long-term relationship success among cohabiters. Professor Scarpati's Introduction to Social Work brought me to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen for thirty hours of service, where I caught my first glimpse of true poverty, and where I felt mobilized to advocate for social policies in the interest of the poor. In every session of Dr. Borland's Gender and American Society, I learn more about stereotypes and gender roles and become more confident in labeling myself a feminist – though I once considered this a dirty word, I am now able to recognize how much women still must accomplish in our society to be on an equal playing field with men.

My experiences as a Sociology major have molded me into a humanitarian. I plan to invest the gifts I've been given and the education I've received into helping others for the rest of my life. My career choices are starkly different from those I aimed for two years ago, and I feel that my present life trajectory will be something far more meaningful than what I dreamed in high school. I think that I will leave The College a much better person than I was when I entered: now someone worldly and aware, someone empathetic, someone well-educated, and someone with the tools to make positive change. So much of who I am and who I will become, I owe to Sociology.

Attention Sociology/Anthropology Majors, Minors, New Transfers and Interested Students!

The student members of Alpha Kappa Delta, International Sociology Honor Society would like to offer you the service of a peer mentor. Your mentor will be a junior or senior Sociology/Anthropology major who can assist you with any questions you may have regarding the major/minor, classes offered, double-majoring, or other topics you wish could be addressed with a peer. If for some reason your mentor cannot completely answer all of your questions throughout the course of the semester, he/she can point you in the right direction to find the answer.

We can match you with a mentor that shares research interests with you, is currently pursuing a concentration you are considering, has studied abroad in a country of interest to you, or has held an internship opportunity you hope to obtain in the future. Current mentors' interests cover a variety of areas in sociology including education, communications, environmental justice, public policy, cultural change and health.

You can converse with your mentor by e-mail or AIM, on the phone, or even meet in person if you so choose. The flexibility of this program and the dedication of the mentors to their coursework and scholarship make this commitment a great resource for you that will complement the assistance you receive from your faculty advisor.

If you are interested in having an AKD mentor, please e-mail Jessica Godofsky, Co-President of AKD at godofsk2@tcnj.edu the following information:

- Full name
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- Your program (major, minor)
- Your class year (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)
- Concentration (either declared or one that is of interest to you)
- Any research interests you have and experiences you hope to aspire to

Thank you!

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