

SociONews

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Looking to the Future: The Sociology & Anthropology Department

Matthew Keating

I recently had the opportunity to speak with the current chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department, Dr. Rachel Adler. Dr. Adler, finishing her second year as chair, is dedicated to ensuring the department continues to grow and adapt to the changing needs of the students in the department and the College. When Dr. Adler took her position in 2005, she was committed to maintain and enhance the excellent program her predecessors, Dr. Li and Dr. Clydesdale, had built. While struggling with budget cuts and a small faculty, albeit an outstanding one, the department has continued the tradition of quality and breadth.

Constrained by lost funding, Dr. Adler adapted her goals to keep the programs that were in place and was forced to wait to launch new concentrations. An anthropologist at heart, Dr. Adler has also been able to achieve her goals of recruiting new students to the Anthropology Minor, and the Urban and Ethnic Studies Concentration.

Emphasizing the field of public health is a new goal in the 2007-08 school year, not only in the Sociology/Anthropology Department, but also campus wide. Public health incorporates many themes that exist in the liberal learning culture at The College of New Jersey, and the department is considering contributing with a departmental concentration and/or a minor in Public Health so that students can further their study of the subject.

A goal that is constant in the department is attracting intellectually engaged and dedicated students, and next year the department plans to publicize and educate students campus-wide about the advantages of double majoring with sociology. A benefit students can gain from study within the department is increased sociological perspective, which allows them to see their own society from a point of view different from their own. Any major on campus can benefit from the study of sociology, and the department has streamlined the major to allow students to take advantage of the program. Dr. Adler emphasized that the classes are rigorous because the department understands how talented our students are and is dedicated to making classes fun, interesting,

and intellectually challenging. Dr. Adler pointed out how studying sociology or anthropology can transform your life and the views that you have about the world around you.

Strengthening and expanding the Social Work Concentration is also a goal for the 2007-08 school year. Dr. Adler is interested in investigating the possibility of linking the social work program at TCNJ to another institution in order to provide students with the option of a 5-year Master's program in Social Work. This would allow students interested in becoming social workers to obtain better jobs faster, something any student would love to do.

Dr. Adler, as she says, "sheepishly" admits that as a cultural anthropologist has always been wary of sociological approaches that are too U.S.-centric. Yet she is proud to be part of a department that truly bridges the gap between anthropology and sociology by allowing students to gain a global perspective beyond the society that they live in.

Furthermore, the culturally diverse curriculum and dedication to both study abroad and critical U.S. Studies provides students an exciting environment to develop as individuals. Dr. Adler hopes that students from all majors will try sociology/anthropology and see how the program can help them learn and grow, as well as enhance what they are learning in other classes. For students already studying sociology/anthropology, she recommends those students try to take different professors to gain new perspectives, consider different concentrations within the major, and benefit from the program's ability to provide students with a wide variety of perspectives of the world we live in.

Dr. Adler and the entire department faculty and staff work diligently to give students the best education possible; the 2007-08 school year will be no exception.

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Prestigious Grant Funds Summer Study of Trenton

Sara Tomczuk

The College of New Jersey may have been trying to downplay its proximity to New Jersey's capital when its name changed a few years ago. However, this summer's research project organized by Dr. Elizabeth Borland and Dr. Diane Bates shows both faculty and student initiative to study Trenton. With the award of a prestigious and competitive grant, set up in teams, students and faculty will work together to research topics such as affordable housing, redevelopment of former industrial sites, contamination of the Delaware River and the effects on its species, as well as local concerns about gang violence, immigrants' rights, and healthcare.

The \$40,000 grant was further aided by TCNJ's generous donation of housing for the student researchers. Only two projects were chosen for summer research this year by the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) and the Alice and Leslie E. Lancy Foundation.

Dr. Borland will be working with sociology major Joanna DeLeon on her new topic studying activists. Dr. Bates will be furthering studies from last summer on issues of environmental justice, and will be working with sociology majors Tamaria Green and Regine Saintilien. Johanna Calle and Johanna Soto will assist Dr. Adler in her continuing study of Chambersburg. Serendipitously, other sociology majors were also chosen to work with Dr. Martin Beirbaum and David Prensky in their projects (Angel Hernandez and Valerie Koch, respectively).

Dr. Borland explained that few faculty members choose to do research in Trenton, and that she hopes this project will attract interest within and around the college, and also benefit the community. In the *TCNJ Update*, Dr. Bates expressed a similar intent of faculty and students, "to conduct applied research while building stronger relationships off campus."

Further information about NCUR can be obtained at its website, www.ncur.org/lancy. Track the teams' progresses this summer on project's website, <http://www.tcnj.edu/~trenton>



Student Insights through a Sociological Lens

Dr. Adler's Course on Global Urbanization

Heather Measley

Last fall of 2006, I took Dr. Adler's course titled "Global Urbanization". I must say that this was an eye-opening experience, filled with rich literature, meaningful lectures, and interesting guest speakers. I wanted to use this article to share some of the key points that I have learned about globalization, as it is a phenomenon that affects all of our lives. I highly recommend taking this course if you have the chance in your studies at TCNJ. You will begin to look at the world in a different light, and will find yourself relating events and news to the concepts you learn in this class.

What is globalization? It can be defined as the growing interconnectedness of economy, politics, communication, and society around the globe. It is a process that dates as far back as colonialism, and is now gaining much attention and study. In this course, we examined the effects of globalization on people living in developing countries, as well as in the United States. It was obvious through our readings and discussions that globalization and injustice are intertwined.

It is important that people become educated about what is going on in the global political economy in order for changes in policies to take place. Current economic systems perpetuate divisions of class, and a large gap between the rich and the poor creates tremendous injustices to those at the bottom. The global economy has a large emphasis of profits over people, which results in many human costs.

In order to solve the problems of social inequality, the situation would have to be fixed at its roots. Hunger and poverty are political. People do not choose to starve, or to lack resources, or to struggle for survival on a daily basis. It is important to understand the relationship between global and local phenomenon. Through the stories of real people that we read in class, it is obvious that lives are built around the social constraints placed on them. Steps toward greater equality and improved living conditions for those in dire situations might be accomplished when policy changes at the global level are made. Hopefully educating others and understanding globalization's effects on people at local levels will help to foster necessary adjustments.

Effects of globalization are found throughout the world. In the US, people are living on the streets. Gangs are a growing problem and people are losing jobs due to outsourcing. In poorer nations, children are dying of curable illnesses like dehydration. People are living in

extremely unsanitary conditions, and violence and death are daily occurrences. Meanwhile, big business and policy makers are making more and more profit and living extravagant lifestyles. They are ignorant to the lives affected by gluttonous business deals.

Will the vicious cycle of the deterioration of our global society end? The answer lies within the decisions of policy makers and big businesses that chose to ignore the far-reaching effects of their actions. It is important to look from a sociological viewpoint to understand globalization in order to facilitate change and promote increased equality throughout the world.

Again, if you ever have the opportunity to take Dr. Adler's Global Urbanization course, seize it!



A Look at Women's Health Issues: Plan B Alexandra Tarsitano

Plan B emergency contraceptive has increasingly been the subject of heated debate among government officials, the medical community, women's rights groups, and the public in general. On Wednesday March 7th, Dr. Susan Wood kicked off Women's History Month with a bang with a lecture on the politics involved with Plan B. Dr. Wood resigned from her position of Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Women's Health at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) because of a delay in approval for Plan B emergency contraception.

While proven safe and effective for women of all ages, and deemed appropriate for over-the-counter availability by the advisory board based on the FDA's criteria, Plan B remained available to women by prescription only until just recently. On August 20th, 2006 it became available over the counter to women age eighteen and older. The controversy which surrounds this issue lies in the unnecessary delay in gaining over the counter approval for Plan B.

The pros and cons of Plan B have been debated in a way very different than those of other drugs. In addition to the safety and effectiveness of the drug, social, behavioral, and ethical issues have been taken into consideration. This leads us to the question: what is so controversial about this particular drug? In short, it deals with a woman's control over her own sexuality and health – a sensitive topic that has been (rightly or not) included

in politics since this government's inception. We are at a point today where we have made considerable progress on the subject of women's health and reproductive freedom, but it is important to realize that this is still an issue very much influenced by political sentiment and agenda.

Student Teaching and Sociology Danielle Dowgin

As I sit here writing my final article for the *SocioNews*, and reflecting on my experiences as a Sociology major at TCNJ, I can't help but to think of a quote from Dr. Seuss's, Oh! The Places You'll Go. "Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best. Wherever you go, you will top all the rest," he writes. I feel this quote holds true of any Sociology major at TCNJ because of the instruction and guidance we have received over the course of the past four years. The professors in the department, in conjunction with our determination to succeed, have really prepared us seniors for the "real world" we will soon be facing.

If you haven't guessed by my quoting of Dr. Seuss, I am an Education and Sociology dual major. As the final component of my Education major, I am currently student teaching in a 3rd grade classroom. I feel the skills I have acquired as a Sociology major have really strengthened my ability to teach and understand children.

Sociology is the study of the social lives of humans, groups, and societies. In simplest form, it is defined as the study of social interactions. One institution that is the focal point of many sociological research projects is the family. As a teacher, learning about different types of family structures is so important because of the increased level of deviations from the "traditional family" in today's society. From my own personal experiences while student teaching, I know that in any classroom you will find a variety of family structures ranging from single parent households, to households with two mothers or fathers. As a Sociology major, I have realized that these children have been raised by different norms and traditions. My job as their teacher is to be aware of these differences and accommodate my classroom accordingly.

Another way Sociology is clearly implemented in every classroom is through interactions; whether they are between a student and teacher, or a student and another student. I have realized during my time in the classroom that a teacher is interacting with students every second of the day. Understanding how and why students interact with each other is a characteristic of a superior teacher, and being a Sociology major makes this easier to do.

Although I am an Education major pursuing a teaching career, being a Sociology major has benefited me a great deal; it has given me deeper insight into the experiences each child brings into the classroom.

Students Gain Knowledge through Experience and Research

An Opportunity to do Research with Dr. Clydesdale Frank Janks

I, along with five other students, have the privilege of conducting research and analysis this semester for a sizeable and multifaceted project under the direction of Dr. Tim Clydesdale. The project was developed after conversations Dr. Clydesdale had with the Lilly Endowment in January of 2006. It is funded through a grant from the Lilly Endowment, and its purpose is to evaluate the impacts of a religious based initiative known as *Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation* or, PTEV. PTEV programs exist on various college campuses nationwide.

As an introduction to the course, we read Dr. Clydesdale's research proposal, which describes the intentions of this study. From day one, the course has been about the processes and life of a researcher and how grant funded research works. We are getting a glimpse into the seemingly chaotic world of tackling a project such as Dr. Clydesdale's. Although it seems glamorous, life as a researcher involves taking no shortcuts. My classmates and I were briefed on the tasks at hand and given a breakdown of the end goals. One of these goals is a book that Tim (as we are now instructed to call Dr. Clydesdale) will be writing.

Most of us have had him as a professor before in the Sociology Department, yet none of us knew what to expect when getting involved in this project. Of course, "involved" is the key word here. I quickly realized how many different angles this evaluation is being tackled from. I have personally conducted in-depth interviews of TCNJ students that have lasted up to two hours. Four of us took a trip to a Roman Catholic College in Pennsylvania (the name is left out due to confidentiality agreements) and conducted in depth interviews with graduating seniors. We have also experienced a couple of "no shows" of students who were supposed to participate. This experience, and tales of previous on-site research that Dr. Clydesdale has conducted, has made it apparent to me that you can never know what to expect.

Since the research is broken up as Dr. Clydesdale sees fit, we are often working on different things. If you have ever had Dr. Clydesdale, you know that his courses are organized in a manner in which exactly what is expected of you is explicitly laid out. (Just ask any of his former SOC 302: "Methods" students.) Much to his dismay, this type of preplanned and formal syllabus is not possible in our current course.

However, even with the unstructured layout of the course, Dr. Clydesdale allocates enough interviews, literature reviews, transcriptions of interviews, over the phone surveys, and other exciting research responsibilities to keep us busy. We have three site visits scheduled throughout the remaining weeks of the semester. This is the most hands-on course I have taken in college. I am learning the realities of applied research, and as I said earlier, it is a privilege.



A New Look at Sociology Jennifer Slavin

As an incoming freshman, I chose sociology as my second major to elementary education. I always thought sociology was interesting and wanted to learn more about the different areas of study. However, I never thought that my career would actually involve sociology. After taking SOC 302 in the fall semester of 2005 with Dr. Clydesdale, my attitude toward a professional career in sociology began to change. The course was challenging, but with the encouragement of Dr. Clydesdale and my prior interest in the material, I learned that I was definitely interested in a sociology related career. I was able to combine my interests of statistics, sociology and education to do a research project for the class. I looked at the values that different ethnicities place on their children and broadened that to see how that would affect how children of these ethnicities function in a classroom. I learned a lot from the research that will be useful as a classroom teacher. With the help of Dr. Clydesdale, I got a job at the National Institute for Early Education Research entering data on children's test scores from lower-class districts around the United States. Even though I had a basic office job, I learned a lot from others who worked there. This job further interested me in a career in sociology. Through Quantitative Research Methods, my choice of job opportunities greatly widened. Even if I choose not to go into the research area of sociology, this knowledge will still be helpful in many areas of my career as an educator.

Dr. Bates' Fall Research Seminar Emily Stark

Last semester, Dr. Bates worked with 9 students to examine the contaminated Martin Luther King – Jefferson annex site in North Trenton and the Delaware River flood sites. Students Katie Nosker, Kelly Dowd, Joe Palumbo, Kevin O'Shea, Tamaria Green, Alexandra Eustache, Regine Saintillian, Brittney Addeo, and Johanna Soto all participated in the research.

The seminar was divided into two groups. Members of the first group completed projects concerning the contaminated Martin Luther King annex site in North Trenton. Students examined various issues affecting the region including Trenton's education system, unemployment and job mismatch in the area, and differences in media coverage. One member of this group also wrote a grant for the EPA with a community organization. Based on their research, the students concluded that the contaminated annex situation is exactly what would be expected by environmental justice literature.

The second group examined the effects of the recent Delaware River floods, and the differences in the New Hope/Lambertville region and Trenton. The students in this group spent the semester collecting data and talking to people in the areas. The students found that people's mental health was affected by the floods, and they viewed the floods as an "unnatural" disaster. These students presented their findings over spring break at the Eastern Sociology Society Meetings.

Dr. Bates was very impressed by the work that each of the seminar students completed over the semester. Each spent a great deal of time researching and learning new skills, including content analysis and grant writing skills, and using GIS (Geographic Information System). The students also had the opportunity to examine issues of race, education, unemployment, and social decline in Trenton, and the role that environmental justice plays in these issues.



Other News and Notes

Two Sociology Majors Earn Award to Pursue Academic Careers

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology is pleased to announce that two junior majors, Joanna De Leon and Tamaria Green have been accepted into the Minority Academic Career (MAC) Undergraduate Program. The MAC program was created in 1985 to provide opportunities and experience for minority students who wish to pursue an academic career. The program is overseen by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education and is administered by the College of St. Elizabeth. Only 25 undergraduates at New Jersey institutions were accepted into the program for 2007-08.

As MAC-Undergraduate Fellows, Joanna and Tamaria will receive mentorship and training by faculty members at TCNJ and statewide. They also have the opportunity to earn up to \$80,000 in scholarship funding towards a doctoral program in one of New Jersey's universities. Congratulations!

AKD President Offered Membership in Phi Beta Kappa – Epsilon of NJ

In its very first year at TCNJ, the nation's oldest academic honor society has offered membership to current AKD – Xi Chapter President Katherine Nosker. Candidates were selected by a committee of Phi Beta Kappa "keyholders" (members) who reviewed portfolios and selected candidates based on a combination of exceptional academic performance and commitment to the liberal arts above and beyond Liberal Learning requirements. Congratulations!

SOCIONEWS Spring 2007 Contributors:

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