

# SOCIONEWS

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A Biannual Newsletter from  
**The Sociology & Anthropology Department**  
at The College of New Jersey

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## Remembering Dr. Shanklin

Jessica Godofsky

The Sociology/Anthropology Department and the College community were deeply saddened by the passing last semester of Dr. Eugenia Shanklin, Professor of Anthropology. Faculty and students remember her as a passionate, loyal teacher and friend who devoted over three decades of professional excellence and personal commitment to the College.

"She was a very well-known scholar and very well-respected in anthropology," said Dr. Rachel Adler, chair of the Sociology/Anthropology department.

Dr. Shanklin, a faculty member since 1973 and a visiting scholar at Princeton University and in Germany, is considered to be one of the founders of the joint Sociology/Anthropology department at the College.

"She was one of the first of our true scholars here," said Assistant Provost and former Sociology/Anthropology department chair Robert Anderson. "We were trying to hire people who were strong academically, and she was one of the first."

Her courses included Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Human Evolution, and the popular elective "Vampires, Werewolves and Witches," frequently culminating with an interactive student costume party, reflecting on the semester's work.

"She was very clever and creative," Dr. Adler said.

Senior sociology major Tamaria Green attended Dr. Shanklin's November memorial service, held in the College's Spiritual Center.

"The faculty talked about the good deeds she had done, and her appreciation and reverence for diverse cultures in her writings and her actions," Green said, particularly moved by the faculty's stories about how Dr. Shanklin touched their professional and personal lives. "They reflected on all of the good things about her."

Dr. Shanklin received her undergraduate and Master's degrees in Anthropology at the University of California - Los Angeles and her doctorate from Columbia University, completing a thesis on Irish theology and folklore. She was awarded two Fulbright Fellowships in her academic career. She is best known for her research on the relocation of Cameroon natural disaster survivors.

She is a co-founder of the Friends of Nyos

Foundation, an organization that provides funding for facility repairs and water system improvement projects in Cameroon.

Her work has been published in many distinguished academic journals, including *American Anthropologist*, *Journal of Volcanology & Geothermal Research*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *Science Digest* and *Journal of Anthropological Research*. One of her most famous publications is her book, *Anthropology and Race: The Explanation of Differences*, which examines race mythology and biology as a racial concept.

Many faculty members who knew her professionally were also caught in the allure of her personal likes and hobbies.

"She was a very complex person. She had lots of different interests that would surprise you," said Dr. Adler.

Those interests included a love of dogs, as Dr. Shanklin attended the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden every year, and an enthusiastic commitment to the Democratic Party, especially in Princeton Township where she lived.

"She was an ardent political activist," Associate Professor of Sociology Diane Bates said. "She participated in many political discussion groups and was very interested in the presidential election."

According to Professor Anderson, Dr. Shanklin, a long-time colleague and friend, was more than just a woman of intellect and academia. "She was a music-lover and a great cook," he said.

She was also an opera fan, and he remembers her extravagant 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. "It was pretty spectacular," said Professor Anderson. He has not forgotten the night he was working late in Bliss Hall, and answered a phone

### Inside This Issue:

- 1 Remembering Dr. Shanklin
- 2 Faculty Developments
- 3 Greetings from Abroad
- 4 Students Research Opportunities
- 5 Happenings on Campus
- 6 Farewell Seniors!

call, to his amazement, for Dr. Shanklin from Paris. "I gave them her home phone number," Professor Anderson said, noting his fascination with the idea that she was receiving a call from overseas. "I thought it was pretty interesting."

Her passing on Halloween seemed especially appropriate to faculty and friends who knew her, as a campus-wide email noted it as her "own special way of leaving the world." Dr. Shanklin was more than an award-winning scholar who contributed to the College of New Jersey community. She was an enthusiastic and unique human being, a friend dedicated to sharing her research experience, keen interests and extraordinary talent with faculty and students to encourage an appreciation for cultural diversity and showcase her love for life. Her legacy in the Department and at the College will forever be remembered and always cherished.



## Faculty Developments

### Dr. Chazelle and the Religion, Culture, and Identity Program Patricia Tevington

I recently had an opportunity to sit down with Dr. Celia Chazelle, professor of history and the coordinator of the Religion, Culture, and Identity program recently started on campus. This title refers to both a learning community started for the 2007-2008 school year, as well as a campus-wide theme of the same name. The program seeks to investigate major religious traditions from all over the world through exploring beliefs, institutions, and religion's impact on both history in general and on individuals.

The learning community consists of about thirty students who presented a letter of intent before registration for the fall 2007 semester. Dr. Chazelle commented that these students only seem to have a curiosity for the subject in common; otherwise, they represent an array of cultural and religious backgrounds, majors and years of study. The faculty sponsors also hail from a variety of scholarly backgrounds. Although she was generally free from expectations about the students, Dr.

Chazelle was struck by the sheer number of interested parties.

As part of the learning community, students must choose three classes from dozens of course offerings, one of which must be a seminar created specifically for the learning community. Since the study of religion is interdisciplinary in nature, the classes are not confined to one department but are located in several: from first year seminars to sociology courses. Besides the seminar, the classes are open to all students, and overlap with the course requirements for the religious studies concentration and the religion minor. In addition to classes, the learning community also sponsors a variety of extracurricular campus-wide activities, including films, guest lecturers and art exhibits. Students in the learning community will earn a certificate of participation for their efforts.

The tragic events of 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq served as catalysts for creating the program. Dr. Chazelle and other involved faculty members felt charged with creating a place where religion can be examined critically and respectfully. Since most TCNJ students have a Christian background, she believes that it is important for them to examine their own religion, especially its changing dynamics and evolution of beliefs. Ideally, the recognition that no religion is static or existing in a vacuum should promote tolerance of other belief structures, such as Islam.

The Religion, Culture and Identity program is also one step towards creating a broader Religious Studies department. Currently, the religious studies concentration, minor, and self-designed major focuses mainly on classes in the philosophy department with REL prefixes, taught by adjunct professors. Ideally, the program will help construct a curriculum for a future department with experts in the field. Historically, tension has existed over the question of whether or not to teach religion on a secular campus, yet Dr. Chazelle believes it is appropriate since a genuine interest is fostered by many students. The program is an effort to demonstrate that interest to the College and establish a base of support.

In reference to the program, Dr. Clydesdale, professor of sociology, emphasizes the fact that the program "brings to campus a host of speakers, films, and special events that expose students to religion around the globe." Although much of the appeal of the Religion, Culture and Identity is that it approaches the subject of religion from many different angles and invites students of all backgrounds to participate, it may be particularly attractive to sociology students hoping to better understand societies around the world and the factors that help shape cultures and identities.



## Dr. Adler's Journey into Nursing Caryn Monta

Dr. Rachel Adler, the chair of the Sociology and Anthropology department, will be taking a sabbatical leave at the end of this semester, in order to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing at Drexel University through their 11 month B.S.N. program. As if that wasn't overwhelming enough, she will then continue on at the College of New Jersey in the fall of 2009 in pursuit of her Nurse Practitioner's degree.

You might ask, "What is an anthropologist doing in a nursing program?" Dr. Adler revealed to me her deep interest in medical anthropology and public health. However, she believes a nursing degree would be more interesting for her than to study towards a Masters in Public Health. Also, a nursing degree would enable her to reach out and be active among people, especially immigrant populations, which is her focus. Dr. Adler admirably wants to be able to provide medical care to people who do not have access to it.

Dr. Adler remains adamant in saying that she is not changing her career—she is simply adding to it. In fact, upon her return to the College as a professor, she might even teach a nursing course amongst her usual anthropology courses. Dr. Adler is proof that one's career and professional life does not stop, but rather, it is a continuous journey. On behalf of the Sociology and Anthropology department, I wish Dr. Adler the best of luck in her future endeavors!



## Greetings from Abroad!

### NGO in Spain Helps Immigrant Community and More Valerie Koch

For the last two months I have been working at an NGO in Madrid called MITA ONG. MITA is recognized for the great work it does in Madrid and beyond. MITA's main objective is to help clients seek low interest, or microcredit, loans in order to open a business.

MITA mainly targets immigrant and women entrepreneurs – people who typically have limited economic opportunities. MITA helps clients to preserve their skills and shows them how to open their own business. MITA provides clients with information sessions, workshops, assistance with writing a business plan, consulting, and helps link the client to the bank. The key to MITA's process is that the client does most of the work, allowing them to show their true dedication and ability to accomplish the task.

Fortunately, the Spanish market is small business friendly and goods like perfume, fruit, or office materials must typically be found in local shops. Therefore, the small business owners have good success rates.

### Life in San Jose, Costa Rica Meagan Terry

Cultural immersion does not take place overnight. Even after three months in the Central American country of Costa Rica I find myself still struggling to understand everything I have experienced. It has been an incredible learning process to pick up and leave behind a world of comfort and security and place myself in a completely new and different culture for three months. My first few weeks in the city of San Jose and excursions to different parts of the country are a blur. My time was spent meeting friends from all over North America, getting oriented with city life and the neighborhood where my home-stay is located, speaking Spanish, and being in disbelief of the extremely varied environment and terrain that can be found.

Costa Rica is located between Nicaragua and Panama, and contains approximately five percent of the world's biodiversity in its many types of tropical

rainforests. The capital city San Jose is situated in the central valley, where everywhere you look you see mountains and a good amount of trees covering them. It is however, apparent through traveling, that deforestation (the clearing and destruction of forests) is a large problem. There are acres and acres of land designated for agriculture as well as cattle pastures, and government policies have promoted cattle ranching which is a main cause for deforestation. Even still, the beauty of Costa Rica has not been lost in many locations: the cloud forest of Monteverde, the impressive active volcano Arenal, numerous beaches of the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, and the huge National Park of Corcovado. I have had the opportunity to visit many different locations as a tourist, and come across effective ecotourism that helps sustain the natural ecosystems.

Aside from travel and first-hand knowledge about the environmental problems in Costa Rica, I have learned a great deal about the people and culture in San Jose. The Ticos, as they call themselves (natives to Costa Rica), are personable and helpful people. There are always warm greetings, with a kiss on the cheek, and many people are genuinely interested in how you are doing that day. Daily life is slower than life in New Jersey. Everyone runs on “Tico time” which means a half-an-hour late to everything. No one is ever in a rush while walking, although the driving in the city is horrendous: there is always traffic and almost all of the taxis have insane drivers. That is not to say that the public transportation is not good; the buses are incredibly cheap (usually around 50 cents) and run often. However, many families tend to have at least one or two cars.

Family is one of the, if not the, most important aspect of life for the Ticos. When I first received my information about the host-family I would be living with, it read that the 30-year-old son was still living at home! (This information ended up being incorrect since he has his own house now with his own family). This information is not uncommon in Costa Rica but imagine my surprise at this when here in America most children leave their parents homes after college graduation.

## Never Underestimate Where an Assignment can Lead.

Kait Boyle

A little over two years ago I was given an interesting assignment in one of my sociology classes—to do a case study of a community organization. I was taking Dr. Borland’s “Organizations in Modern Society” class and wasn’t quite sure what I should focus on. However, being a double major in women and gender studies, I have a strong interest in sexuality and health, and began searching for a group that worked on such issues. My search started and ended with one organization—HiTOPS, a non-profit located in Princeton.

I was drawn to HiTOPS because of its mission to help young people make responsible choices about their life and their health, and the way in which they do that—peer-led educational programs, wellness and prevention healthcare services, emotional and psychological support services, and training and consultation to other organizations. Using sociology as a tool, I was able to evaluate and understand how a non-profit tackles controversial issues in youths such as homophobia, gender bending, sexual assault and dating violence, gains and sustains legitimacy and success in their community.

Through my research of the non-profit, I also became involved with fundraising, realizing what important work they were doing. The knowledge I gained by working as a participant *and* as an observer of the group was invaluable. I quickly learned how uncomfortable it could feel to have disapproving adults shake their head at my distribution of condoms, and how empowered I felt when a young person opened up and shared their concerns about sex with me, a complete stranger.

In the end, an assignment that could have easily been just that—an assignment for some class—became the catalyst for my desire to work in a non-profit on youth sexual health issues. Through my connections with HiTOPS and experiences in research and activism, I was able to get a job with Teen PEP, a group located around the corner from, and affiliated with, HiTOPS. I’ve been working here for four months, and everyday I become more personally invested in the health and sexual education of teens—to the point where I can’t see myself doing any other type of work.

While I’ve always enjoyed doing research, this class allowed me to bring that research to life. In my current job, I see how “controversial” social research on gender and sexuality that has been done in the past is now opening the doors for wiser, safer and healthier generations to come.

## Students Experiences Reseraching in the Field



## **Elementary Education and Sociology: The Best of Both Worlds**

**Brittany Addeo**

As a junior here at TCNJ, I realize the importance of having good teachers. I can vividly remember my freshman year having a meeting with all the sociology and elementary education majors and having some of the speakers try to talk us out of sociology as our second major. As a naïve freshman, I was really tempted but I decided that I would give sociology a chance and see if I liked it. I haven't looked back since and am so thankful for that.

Sociology and education, especially elementary education, are two subject areas that are so closely tied together. However, I can see that if you are not immersed in both areas, how you might not get that feeling. In order to be an effective teacher, something all education majors strive to be, you must be able to communicate with and understand people. You must also be able to understand the social factors that affect the lives of your students. This is where a major in sociology comes in extremely handy. Without my background in sociology, I feel as though I might not be as successful in my classrooms.

I was given the chance to work on a research project with Dr. Diane Bates and a team of sociology students in the Fall of 2006 where we looked at the Trenton School District and some of the inequalities that exist there. This was a perfect opportunity for me to use my skills as both a sociology student and an elementary education student to conduct the best research possible and come up with the best solution.

So, if you are a sociology major and you do not know where to go with it or if you are an education major and you are not sure what to choose as your second major, I strongly urge you to try majoring in both. While some people will never see the relationship between the two majors, they really do compliment each other very well.

## **Presenting Research: Annual Eastern Sociological Research Conference**

**Regine Saintilien**

I had the opportunity to present my research as the Annual Eastern Sociological Research Conference in the February. I presented on work that I did during the summer of 2007. My research partner, Tamaria Green, and I worked with Dr. Diane Bates of the Sociology Department on researching a contaminated school site in Trenton. The presentation was a great experience and

Tamaria and I created a poster about the research that we participated in. During this time of the conference, student researchers present their work on display boards. Other students as well professors and professionals had the opportunity to look at the displays and ask the student researchers questions. I enjoyed the experience because I got the chance to discuss my research with others. It was a great networking experience as I got to meet students and professors from many different sociology departments. It was also fun because I got the chance to see the research of other students. There was an award for the best poster presentation, unfortunately, Tamaria and I did not win. Despite this, I walked away from the conference with more knowledge and a greater appreciation for the field of sociology.

## **Women's History Month on Campus**

### **Dr. Amini Wadud Speaks During Women's History Month**

**David Novak**

On March 3, continuing the theme of this year's Women's History Month, "Feminists Do Religion," Dr. Amini Wadud visited the College to discuss her history in the Islamic community. The dialogue began with the screening of *The Noble Struggle of Amini Wadud*, a documentary directed by Elli Safari about the Islamic feminist. Dr. Wadud first received international attention three years ago by conducting a mixed-gender prayer session in New York. The congregation was highly controversial in the Islamic community, as it challenged a traditional Islamic religious practice mandating that men must pray in front of women. This dogma is rooted in the traditional Islamic notion that men are naturally distracted by women and therefore the two sexes must be separated, a belief which Dr. Wadud considers both degrading to men and women and contradictory to the Koran. As an African American Muslim, Dr. Wadud questions the role of Islamic women not only in America, but across the globe, and urges Islamic women to become more active in both private and public realms. She further highlighted the idea of horizontal reciprocity, a system in which it would be possible to exchange positions with anybody in the Islamic community without taking that individual's honor. Such a system would essentially encourage gender equality.

# Farewell Seniors and Good Luck!

## Note to Graduating Seniors Jessica Jaskot

It is that time of year again...the countdown clock in the Rathskellar is ticking and the graduation date is getting closer! Learning about the founding theorists of sociology and knowing SPSS like the backs of our hands is long gone, and what lies ahead are limitless opportunities to apply the knowledge gained from our experiences in college. We have filled out the graduation application forms, measured our heads for the cap to wear on graduation day, and now look to complete the final courses that we will take as undergraduate students.

Looking forward to the next phase of our lives, it is important to reflect on the pool of skills and knowledge that we now hold because of our studies in sociology. I believe it is vital that we acknowledge the uniquely focused lens through which we, as sociology majors, are

privileged with to view the world. We have an advantage that allows us to understand different spheres of society, the way structures in society function, and many of the socially constructed concepts that are brought up in daily conversation. Our professors and advisors have challenged us to think more critically and form in-depth analyses of the occurrences around us.

Let us be thankful for the vast amount of encouragement and dedication that has been given to us from the department of Sociology and Anthropology as we receive our diplomas on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Congratulations and best wishes for the future to the TCNJ graduating class of 2008!



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