



Sociology Newsletter

fall 2008

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT MOVES TO NEW GREEN BUILDING

The new, state-of-the-art building on campus, Spes Unica Hall, is now open. With money raised by donor contributions, this new environmental-friendly building is now home to several departments, including Sociology. Located near both the Science building and Madeleva Hall, Spes Unica Hall is convenient and easy to access for those both on and off campus.

Building preparation first began in November 2006 and was completed by the beginning of the fall 2008 semester. It is three stories tall, complete with a computer lab, high tech classrooms, group study rooms, a reflection room, and a Spes Unica Café. In order to “go green” the building has water efficient bathrooms, passive solar lighting, and a green roof over the atrium, which will be used to conserve energy. All areas in Spes Unica offer wireless internet to accommodate students and faculty.

The Spes Unica Hall dedication took place on Thursday, October 30th, 2008. During the dedication, Bishop John D'Arcy of the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese blessed the building. Drop by the Sociology Department for a tour of our new space.



SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW FACULTY MEMBER CARRIE ERLIN

Our newest full time member of the Sociology Department is assistant professor Carrie Erlin. Carrie originally came to Saint Mary's in 2005 through a Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership (CWIL) fellowship. As a CWIL fellow, Carrie taught courses on deviance, crime, and law, thus utilizing both her background in law and in sociology. Carrie now teaches introductory classes as well as Crime and Society.

Carrie is currently working on two research projects. The first is on the construction of parental identity after the loss of child custody. This project stems from Carrie's experience as a custody attorney before she received her Ph.D. in sociology. The second is an analysis of the arrest and ticketing data of minorities in the South Bend area. Carrie is also testing new pedagogical techniques used in her courses.

While working on these projects, Carrie has enlisted the help of students. She has been impressed with how passionate Saint Mary's students are regarding social justice issues. She also commented on the way that Saint Mary's students are driven to understand and resolve equality and social using sociological theories.

A course that Carrie said she would like to develop in the future would analyze social deviance among sports “super fans.” A sports fan herself, Carrie is a die hard Bears fan who shows her Bears pride in her office décor.



SPES UNICA and the NEW SOCIOLOGY LABS

October 30, 2008 was Dedication Day for Spes Unica Hall. The Sociology Department moved in late August to our new suite area. While the faculty are enjoying their beautiful new offices, complete with windows, what is even more exciting are the new Sociology Labs. The Sociology Department has two new labs in Spes Unica Hall for the use of both faculty and students: the Media Lab and the Statistics Lab.

The Media Lab is designed for conducting research related to visual media (e.g. print advertisements, TV, websites, etc...) using content analysis, surveys, or focus group methodologies. The Statistics Lab is designed to allow students and faculty to work as a research team on large data sets. In order to have access to statistical data sets, the College joined the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. The Roper Center "is one of the world's leading archives of social science data, specializing in data from surveys of public opinion. The data held by the Roper Center range from the 1930s, when survey research was in its infancy, to the present. Most of the data sets are from the United States, but over 50 nations are represented" (to see Roper Center data, go to: <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>).



On Dedication Day the Sociology faculty and students presented informational programs in both labs. The **Media Lab** showcased a media-based research project Susan Alexander conducted with psychology professor Karen Chambers comparing text versus video with regard to information retention pertaining to eating disorders. The research findings showed no

difference in students' retention of information; however, the video has an additional benefit of positively impacting a student's affective understanding of her body. The research paper titled "Media Literacy as an Educational Method for Addressing College Women's Body Image Issues" was published in the journal *Education* (4:



490-497. 2007).

In the **Statistics Lab**, students demonstrated how they have used quantitative data in various research projects. First, students gave a PowerPoint presentation of a quantitative research project completed for Mary Ann Kanieski's course SOC 372 Sociological Statistics. Second, data stemming from a joint student-faculty project Carrie Erlin designed on race and arrest rates in South Bend was reviewed. Third, quantitative data analysis completed for Carrie's course SOC 373 Crime and Society was demonstrated.

In addition to the new Sociology Labs, sociology students will also be able to make use of the new labs in the Psychology Department. These include the Social Psychology Experiment Lab, the Clinical Interview Lab, and the Developmental Lab. With all these new research spaces available, we are looking forward to creative new student and faculty research in the years to come.



A CAREER IN ORGANIC FARMING by Denae Friedheim ('05)

Six years ago, as a sophomore at Saint Mary's, had you asked me what I planned to be doing at this point in my life, farming is certainly not what I would have told you! I entered college with hopes of becoming a physician, and in my first year declared a biology major with a pre-med focus. It took only one course, good ol' SOC203 (Social Problems), to tremendously influence my plans.

This was not because my interest in medicine had taken a backseat to sociology; instead, my sociology courses allowed me to see the issues facing our health care system from a structural perspective. I wound up double majoring in sociology and biology and constantly found fascinating linkages between the two.

I recently enrolled in Michigan State University's Organic Farming Certificate Program. The program consists of one year of intensive course and practicum work in organic farming and sustainable agriculture, including the operation of a 48-week CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program.

A jump from medicine to sociology makes sense, but what, you may be asking, do either of those have to do with my career in organic farm-

ing? My answer would be, "everything." Our social relationships, social stratification, and

cultures affect every part of our food system (and our food system, in turn, affects them). The fate of agriculture is among the largest public health issues our society faces, as the majority of the health problems that exist in the U.S. are diet-related. Access to healthy food in urban areas has always been of interest to me.

Organic farming is not only ecologically sustainable, it is a mechanism of food production that can provide nutritional and financial stability for individual communities. There is incredible potential in many cities for urban agriculture (Detroit is one example). I intend to work with local schools and community centers on transforming vacant land into community gardens, especially in neighborhoods that have limited access to fresh produce. Eventually I hope to also own my own organic farm.

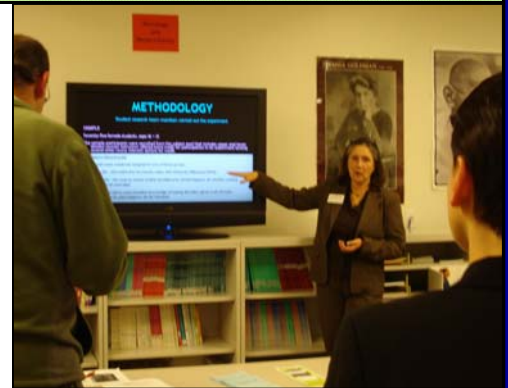


NEW SOCIOLOGY COURSE: CONTESTED MASCULINITIES

Susan Alexander will be teaching a new course in the spring, SOC 220 "Contested Masculinities." Susan notes that women's studies scholars, including sociologists, have devoted great attention to the varying, and sometime conflicting, versions of femininity. Drawing upon feminist research and empirical social science research, the field of men's studies has been developing during the past two decades in order to analyze what it means to be a man in various cultural and social contexts.

Today, men's studies scholars understand that there is not a single form of (hegemonic) masculinity; rather there are multiple "masculinities" (e.g., race/ethnic group-based, sexuality-based, class-based, nationality-based, etc.). Masculinity is not understood as a way of being (inherent, biological traits) but as a performance, a way of "doing" masculinities. Since the performance of masculinity is constantly undergoing adaptation, newly developing forms of masculinities may be "contested" by the dominant culture. Furthermore, the images constructed of men in public contexts, like mass media, are perceived as both positive and negative. As competing images of men unfold on TV screens, in magazine pages, and in other public sites, we must ask, what does it mean to be a man today?

This course will introduce students to the topic of masculinity and men's studies by examining how various forms of masculinity are constructed and performed by individuals and how individual performativities create larger social and cultural understandings of masculinity in specific historical, social, and cultural settings. Additionally, students will engage in an applied research project on masculinity using the new Media Lab in Spes Unica.



SOCIOLOGY CLUB NEWS



Left to right:
Amanda, Meg, Ashley, Meghan, and Sarah

The Sociology Club is up and running this year and we are planning big things! This year, our Sociology Club officers are Meg Frechette (2009) as President, Sarah Rompola (2010) as Vice-President, Meghan McEvoy-Hein (2009) as Treasurer, Ashley Bruce (2009) as Secretary, and Amanda Deja (2009) is the department's representative to Student Academic Council.

Plans are underway for the Sociology Club Shirt. As many current majors and alumnae know, the Sociology Club designs a new shirt every year. This year we plan to begin sales within the next few weeks. We also plan to continue the tradition of the annual Sociology Club sweatpants; all profits from sweatpants sales going to the CommUnity fund — a fund established by our sociology alumna Chelsea Gulling to support any Saint Mary's College staff workers in financial need.

Distribution of the fund is determined by the workers,

themselves. Sociology Week scheduled for February is looking promising with fun activities and interesting topics to be addressed. Several speakers are planned with topics ranging from female body perception to "what to do with a sociology major?" In addition, the Sociology Club is scheduling a sociological movie night with panel discussion afterwards. The week will also include a dinner for sociology majors and other fun activities. So get ready for a great Sociology Week! If you want to get involved, please contact any of the Sociology Club officers.

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