

SOCIOLOGY AT CAROLINA

SOCIOLOGY NEWSLETTER USC-COLUMBIA SPRING 2009

CONGRATULATIONS DECEMBER 2008 GRADUATES:

Ashley L. Brown, Matthew W. Burris, Melissa A. Bush, Kevin Choklad, Elizabeth Duvall, Heather M. Graham, Brigitte R. Gunby, Lauren A. Hall, David W. Higgins, Shalene Langston, Sarah K. Leslie, Kathryn M. Licata, Whitney McFadden, Amanda McKinney, Jeanette Medina, Nicole P. Nelms, Chrisandra Perry, Aliza F. Petiwala, Leah G. Shabkie, Erica M. Smith, Robin A. Smith, Megan Traynham, Alice K. Wheat, Allison Whittle, Sean E. Wideberg. The Department of Sociology wishes you Good Luck!

MAJORS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Barry Blitch, Liz Logan, and Christina McClelland for being selected by the sociology faculty to receive the Outstanding Senior Major in Sociology Award (2008 – 2009) at the University's Awards Day Ceremony, April 16, 2009.

RISING SENIOR OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Audrey Ball and Lydia DiSabatino for being selected by the sociology faculty to receive the Rising Senior Award (in Sociology) for 2009 – 2010 from the College of Arts and Sciences.

ALPHA KAPPA DELTA INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY HONOR SOCIETY

Barry Blitch and Lydia DiSabatino will become members of AKD this spring. Congratulations. If you are interested in becoming a member, please look for announcements posted during the 2009 – 2010 academic year.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Katie Licata, who graduated in December, is working in Madison, Wisconsin as a Project Manager for a healthcare software company. Katie says that while this was not something she ever saw herself doing, she enjoys working with others and she travels a great deal. In the future, she plans to return to school.

SOCIOLOGY ALUMNI TEACHING ABROAD

Robin Nichols, who graduated in May 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and a Minor in Japanese, is teaching English at six elementary and two junior high schools in Japan. Robin learned of this opportunity through the JET Program (Japanese Exchange and Teaching, www.jetprogramme.org). She is employed by the Nagai City Board of Education in Yamagata Prefecture. She is contracted to stay until August

2010, but may stay longer if it can be arranged. Robin writes about her experiences:

Several of my professors recommended that I apply for the JET Program. I attended the Career Fair at the Metropolitan Convention Center to speak with a representative from the program. After the application and interview process, I left for Japan in July 2008. Teaching experience was not a prerequisite for this program, so teaching seminars are provided every few months.

When applying to teach abroad (in whatever country), I recommend that you use a large organization like the JET Program, because it has a wonderful support network for everything from culture shock to teaching methods and ideas. I also advise you start looking for a program as soon as possible.

Traveling abroad is one of the best decisions I've ever made. It has been both a very empowering and humbling experience. I learned a great deal about myself while learning about other people and their culture. I highly recommend traveling abroad after graduation.

Robin adds that one of her favorite cultural activities while in Japan has been the "fire walk." She states: In January, I went to a Buddhist temple where many people were praying for a good new year. The monks burned a huge brush pile while chanting. Then they spread the red hot coals out across the snow-covered ground for everyone to walk across barefoot. I was scared at first, but after watching others do it unharmed, I decided to try too. My feet didn't get burned, and it didn't hurt either. Apparently, this fire walk is not common practice all over Japan. Cultural events like this vary by region. I feel very fortunate to have been able to participate in that event, and I am looking forward to others over the next couple years. If you wish to contact Robin, she welcomes you to email her at rnichols09@yahoo.com

SOCIOLOGY MAJOR SPENDS FALL IN WEST AFRICA

Barry Blitch, a sociology major graduating in May 2009, spent the fall semester in Senegal, West Africa through a Rotary Cultural Ambassador Scholarship. Barry says:

This was one of the best and most defining times of my life. My journey started simply. I walked into the Office of Fellowships and Scholarship Programs (At USC, Legare 220, 777-0958, www.sc.edu/ofsp/) just curious about what was out there. The staff told me about the Rotary Scholarship, where you can be an ambassador to any country in the world with a Rotary club and receive language training too. This was ideal for me because the scholarship's purpose speaks to something we as sociology majors do on a daily basis—observe and discover the similarities and differences between groups of people. Getting to immerse myself in African and Islamic culture allowed me to live a totally different life and was an amazing experience beyond that which you can get in a classroom.

See Reverse Side →

Traveling offers you a different mindset on the world and it's not only fascinating, it's also fun. I highly recommend just going to the OFSP and seeing what's available because they help you through the entire application process and find a scholarship that fits you best. The opportunities you can get from it are completely worthwhile.

Barry adds about her experience in Senegal, West Africa, that as an ambassador: I lived with a local family and transformed from Barry Blich to Sofietou Diouf. I'd like to tell you about each of the wonderful members in my big, adopted family, but it's taboo to talk about the specific members in one's household. Evil spirits may hear and take those people away. This is just one example of the traditional animistic beliefs that took some getting used to, but became second nature.

Everyone I met welcomed me as one of their own because they place the highest value on *teranga*, or hospitality. My little sister gave up her foam mattress for me and slept on the floor. At the end of Ramadan, the family surprised me with a celebration outfit so I could fit in with the locals—an outfit I later found out cost almost as much as the housekeeping girls made in three months. The family was middle class by Senegalese standards, but considering the outdoor bathroom and kitchen with a lone kerosene burner on the ground, I learned it's all relative. Police corruption and daily power outages were weaknesses common in developing nations. Yet the remarkably communal way of living was the greatest strength. Neighbors came visiting every night. Old and young played together. We all ate around one big bowl, sharing one cup. All my life I had been taught it was important to be an individual, but there I realized the mindset of being part of a greater people.

SOCIOLOGY MAJOR RESEARCHING THROUGH MAGELLAN SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Christina McClelland, a Sociology major graduating in May, has been doing research this past year through the Magellan Scholar program offered by USC. To learn more about that program, see the news item following this article.

Christina writes: I am currently involved with conducting my own undergraduate research project through the Magellan Scholar program. Being able to participate has allowed me opportunities that many students don't get to experience until graduate school, but not without a little guidance, of course.

The program requires that each student, or pair of students, collaborate with a faculty mentor to gain professional experience. I am lucky enough to be able to work with Dr. Shane Thye. He has been by my side throughout the process. I initially came to him without any prior research experience, but knew that I wanted to attain some before graduate school. He has guided me through each step, and has helped with deciding on a topic, developing a proposal, and answering questions.

I could not have been more excited when my proposal was accepted last March, but that was only the beginning! It has certainly become a big learning process because I am involved with every part of the experiment. One of the most important lessons I have learned thus far is self-discipline. Sometimes balancing the project with all of my other schoolwork can be challenging, but I manage to get everything accomplished.

That being said, this April brings the conclusion of my experiment. If the results are statistically significant, then I

may get the chance to present them at the American Sociological Association conference this summer. That would definitely give me professional experience and a competitive edge needed for applying to a graduate program! If such opportunities interest you, then I highly recommend checking out the Magellan Scholar program. It has been a wonderful experience for me and surely you'll find the same! Good Luck! Let me know if it sounds okie dokie! Thanks!

Christina

MAGELLAN RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The Magellan Scholar program was created to enrich the academic experience of USC's undergraduates through research opportunities in all disciplines from science, technology, and medicine, to theatre, music, and art. By providing access to faculty mentoring relationships and a professional research experience, this program enables students to creatively explore their interests at a more in-depth level than can be attained in the classroom. The Magellan Scholar program provides opportunities for undergraduates to build a competitive edge in the job market. If you are interested, learn more about the program at www.sc.edu/our/magellan.shtml.

RESEARCHING THE PARANORMAL

Professor Barry Markovsky and Sociology major Carrie Bedol are collaborating on a unique project involving around 65 (!) research assistants. (Undergrads Patrick McCullough and Deb Rutland also helped develop the project last year.) The assistants are volunteers currently taking Markovsky's SOCY 330 course, "Sociology of the Paranormal." The purpose of the study is to get a sense of the range and content of television programming on paranormal topics available today in the U.S. After the student-assistants complete a questionnaire about their own interests and beliefs in the paranormal, Carrie will survey the TV Guide website along with those of various television networks for paranormal shows to air during an upcoming week. These programs will be randomly assigned to the student/assistants who will all be trained in the use of a special form that asks a variety of questions about the assigned program. The result should be an accurate portrayal of the paranormal television landscape for the chosen week, including the proportion of TV programs with paranormal content, topics of the programs, type of program (reality show, reenactment, news, etc.), kinds of evidence and explanations offered, whether or not knowledgeable skeptics were consulted, and so on. If successful, the investigators hope to further expand their sample, and publish their findings in *Skeptical Inquirer* or *Skeptic Magazine*. Whether or not that happens, Markovsky says that the process of developing this project has been a great learning experience for all involved.

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PROFESSOR DEFLEM ON LEAVE FOR SPRING 2009

Professor Mathieu Deflem is on sabbatical leave during spring 2009. A sabbatical provides professors the opportunity to do research, travel for academic purposes, and other academic activities that they could not do during a semester filled with their regular duties.

Dr. Deflem states that: I will be doing research and giving talks at various universities abroad. In March I will be in Montreal, Canada, at the French-language University of Montreal as well as at McGill University. In April, I will be talking about my recent book, *Sociology of Law* (which is also used in SOCY 540), at Lund University in Sweden. Additional sabbatical stays will take place in June, at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, and at universities in Bamberg and Heidelberg, both in Germany. Besides talking from my recent work in the sociology of law and on the policing of terrorism, I will also use the sabbatical to conduct research on the sociology of Talcott Parsons (a famous, deceased sociologist) and on the evolution of abortion law in the United States.

MAYHEW MEMORIAL LECTURE

Dr. Peter Marsden, Harvard University, will give the annual Bruce Mayhew Memorial Lecture on Thursday, April 9 at 3:30. This Memorial Lecture honors the late Professor Bruce Mayhew, an outstanding structural sociologist at USC. Look for announcements.

CAREER EXPLORATION: IT'S FOR ALL STUDENTS, NOT JUST SENIORS!

Every semester devote some time (perhaps one hour each week) to career exploration. Use the services of the Career Center; search the web to learn about careers; where possible, tie a course assignment to a potential career; do a phone interview with people in careers that interest you and shadow them for part of a day; go to USC's Career Festivals to learn more about careers and employers even if you're not a senior; consider taking SOCY 399 (Independent Study in Sociology) and tie what you do in it to career interests; use volunteer activities and part-time jobs for learning about careers and developing career skills, and more!

Ask supervisors to write letters of recommendation for you when you end a volunteer activity or part-time job. When you look for your first job after graduation from USC, you'll have those recommendation letters to show to potential employers. However, don't wait until you graduate to look for that first job, start looking at least several months in advance, even the semester before you graduate.

Career Exploration is for all students, not just seniors.

CAREER CENTER

Check out the Career Center early in your career at Carolina. The Career Center can help you with career exploration, resume writing, job shadowing, job interviewing, placement, and more. The Career Center is on the 6th Floor of the Business Administration Building, 777-7280; www.sc.edu/career/.

If you have career questions, go to www.sc.edu/career/cascdp and use the "Exploring Career Options" Section.

SOCIOLOGY ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENTS

Are you interested in establishing a sociology organization for undergraduate students? Sociology students could arrange for guest speakers, career workshops, and other activities of interest. If you are interested, the sociology department will assist you in establishing the organization. See Lala Steelman, Sloan 322.

WEBSITE FOR SOCIOLOGY MAJORS

Check out the American Sociological Association's website for students. Career and other information is available. Go to www.asanet.org/ and click on "students."

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT WEBSITE

Checkout the revised website for your Sociology Department at Carolina: www.cas.sc.edu/SOCY/. Thanks to Professor Mathieu Deflem for his efforts.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MAY AND AUGUST GRADUATES!

The Department of Sociology congratulates, in advance, sociology majors graduating this May or August. Good Luck and Keep in Touch!

THE FACULTY WISHES ALL OF YOU A SUCCESSFUL END TO THE SPRING SEMESTER.