Faculty Spotlight: Chara Armon, PhD, Augustine and Cultural Seminar Program

In this interview series we will bring you inside the world of Villanova’s professors and explore how their work relates to creating a sustainable future. In this issue, we hear from Dr. Chara Armon, a postdoctoral fellow in the Augustine and Cultural Seminar program.

What is your academic background?
My bachelor’s degree is from Colorado College, where I did a combined major called Classics-History-Politics. While my undergraduate and graduate studies primarily focus on religious and cultural history in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, my dissertation explored the origins of devotion to St. Joseph, which was promoted by the late medieval Italian Franciscan friars. My PhD in History is from Cornell University.

How long have you been teaching at Villanova?
I arrived to Villanova 10 years ago, teaching part-time. I am now ending my fifth year of teaching full-time as a postdoctoral fellow in the Augustine and Cultural Seminar program.

In your own words, how would you define sustainability?
While I don’t think we, as a human species, have a clear understanding of sustainability, the best definitions, from my point of view, focus not only on what humans need in order to survive, but also the needs of all life forms. We must not forget that sustainability is not just about survival, but the goal of thriving and flourishing long into the future. If I had to put this all together, it would sound something like: ‘flourishing’ or ‘thriving’ on planet Earth involves human lifestyles that protect and honor the needs of all life forms on the planet, and perhaps most importantly, regenerate Earth’s life systems of air, water, soil, and ecosystems.

Why is sustainability important to you?
There are many reasons why sustainability is important to me, the top three being: health of the planet, health of humanity, and love for what we are losing. I believe we can live harmoniously, responsibly and healthfully on the Earth, in a way that promotes not only human health, but also ecosystem prosperity. I know what it is like to live with pristine air, water and soil, and I am pained to see that my children and future generations will not know such beauty. I hope that in my lifetime we will see a renewal and regeneration of our national and global environments.
What is your current research focused on?
For the past several years I've worked in the fields of spirituality and ecology (also known as religion and ecology) and humanities and ecology. I published an article in 2014 on the process of teaching undergraduates about sustainability through a sustainable agriculture course, and I'm currently working on a book chapter and possible book on that same topic. I've also done some research with organic farmers about their spiritual or religious perspectives, and this spring I'm chairing a conference panel at Harvard that examines connecting points between spiritual/religious perspectives and sustainable agriculture.

Do you collaborate with others on your research?
Yes, both here at Villanova and beyond. For the past several years, I have co-taught a class with William Stehl in the Center for Peace and Justice on sustainable agriculture and social justice, called Growing into Sustainability. I am also collaborating with colleagues at Regis University of Denver on co-designing a humanities-based sustainable agriculture course we both teach and have written about (see 2014 article). Last fall, we delivered a conference paper together, and plan on transforming that into a book chapter.

Have you been able to incorporate sustainability into your course work?
Yes. I teach the year-long Environmental Learning Community version of Villanova’s Augustine and Culture Seminar. We spend the year considering how the human relationship to nature appears in foundational western texts ranging from the Bible and Augustine's Confessions to medieval saints' lives, early modern political theory, and modern novels, poetry, and scientific writings. Additionally, I co-teach a class on sustainable agriculture.

What's New on Campus?!

Recycling bins in Connelly Center
Check out the spiffy new recycling centers in Connelly, located at every entrance.

New Reusable Mug
Check out the new reusable mug at Holy Grounds. The mugs are $2, and are BPA free, microwave and dishwasher save, and 100% recyclable. Use this cup on campus and get $0.25 off refills.
2015 Hydration Station Numbers

373,000 plastic bottles saved

9 Cars kept off the road

125 gallons oil saved

$444,000 Saved

COMING IN 2016, NEW STATIONS FOR ALL OF SOUTH CAMPUS!

Hydration Station Locations
Villanova vs. Creighton
February 3, Wednesday 8:00PM

Help make a difference.
Volunteer.
email liesel.schwarz@villanova.edu

PARIS CLIMATE TALK: IN REVIEW

Friday, January 15 1:00-8:00PM
Climate Negotiation Simulation
Idea Accelerator

Tuesday, January 19 6:00-7:00PM
COP21: Three Perspectives
Bartley 1010
Guest Speakers:
Poune Saberi, MD
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Meadow Hackett
Deloitte
Joseph Robertson
Citizens Climate Lobby

Photo by Prince Varun
Environmental Issues Seminar Series
Spring 2016
11:30 – Location TBA

Monday, January 11
“Aerosol Organic Matter and Iron Characteristics over the North Atlantic
Ocean: Implications for Iron Binding Ligands and Iron Solubility”
Dr. Andrew Wozniak
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Old Dominion University

Wednesday, January 20
“Particulate Air Pollution and Health Effects”
Dr. Kabindra Shakya
Department of Environmental Health Science, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Friday January 29
“Land, Sea, and the State:
Coastal Land Reclamation in Transforming China”
Dr. Young Rae Choi
Department of Geography, Ohio State University

Wednesday February 3
“Hydrologic Variability and Responses to Climate and Land Use Change
from the Himalayas to the Amazonian River Basin”
Dr. Prajjwal Panday
Geography, Clark University

Wednesday February 10
“The Value of Urban Ecosystem Services: A Spatially-Explicit Multicriteria
Analysis of New York City’s Landscape”
Dr. Peleg Kremer
Department of Geography & the Environment, Villanova University

Monday February 15
“Species Distribution in the Age of Big Environmental Data –
Case Studies of Diversity and Distribution Shift of North American Birds”
Qiongyu Huang
Geographical Sciences, University of Maryland

Monday February 22
“Changes in the U.S. Tornado Disaster Landscape”
Stephen Strader
Department of Geography, Northern Illinois University
You can now sign up for Winter Shares! Deadline is January 8th.

Join the 2016 Winter CSA

Follow this link to sign up:

Use these coupon codes during signup to receive the Villanova Discount:
Coupon for weekly shares: vuwinterweekly
Coupon for biweekly shares: vuwinterbiweekly

Vegetable Share
(6 - 8 items per week)

You can expect to find 6 to 8 vegetable items in this box each week, making it the perfect size for one to three people. A veggie a day keeps the doctor away, right?

Veggie Examples: Potatoes, Carrots, Cabbage, Leeks, Brussels Sprouts, Celeriac, Sweet Potatoes, Watercress, Microgreens, Young Spinach, Baby Greens, Celery, Rutabagas, Turnips, Radish Mix, Sunchoke, Horseradish, Winter Squash, Pumpkins, Onions, Cauliflower.

Veganize It!  Omnivore It!  Chicken Share  Meat Share

Bread Share  Yogurt Share  Pantry Share  Egg Share  Cheese Share  Milk Share  Tofu Share