A Message from the Chair

Welcome back from fall break. Now that the chaos from mid-terms is over, pre-registration advisement is upon us. The University takes the advisement process very seriously. Advisement involves much more than obtaining your PIN. It is an opportunity to chat with your advisor about courses, your major and life after Villanova.

It is time to start thinking about next semester (registration begins Friday, October 31). After many years of advisement, I have learned that the primary factors which determine course selections are days, times and specific professors. I encourage you to include another factor. This was suggested to me by a student last year. Following the advice of his older sister (in graduate school) and future brother-in-law (in the corporate world) he told me he selected classes that . . . .”would help me when I get out of school. Easy classes may be fun, but they do not help you after you leave Villanova.”

While there is nothing wrong with taking an occasional entertaining course, the real criterion should be whether the course will help you “down the road.” Any course that requires critical thinking (comprehension or synthesis vs. memorization) and develops your communications skills (written and verbal) will serve you well. You will need these skills to be competitive in graduate school, as well as, the world of work. Life in the “real world” is much less forgiving than in the undergraduate world.

Dr. Tom Arvanites

New Criminal Justice Major!

The department is pleased to announce the formation of the criminal justice major. This program will emphasize the justice component (rather than a technical program which offers vocational training). The program is designed to educate students about the causes of crime and the effectiveness (and implications) of current and proposed criminal justice policies. Like the sociology major, courses in this program will stress writing and critical thinking. Dr. William Waegel (SAC 287) is the Director.

This is an eleven course major. Many of the criminal justice (CRJ) and sociology courses will be cross-listed, thus counting towards either major. A list of the requirements and courses can be found on the department’s webpage. Admission requirements are the completion of 30 credits (at Villanova) and a minimum 2.75 GPA.
A 1998 survey found that a majority of Americans (53 percent) fear drunk drivers more than any other highway problem.

MADD, 1997

My internship with the Pennsylvania State Probation and Parole Program was both exciting and enlightening. The opportunity allowed me to learn a tremendous amount about certain aspects of the criminal justice system firsthand. This internship provided a great learning experience that supplemented my classroom education. Reading state memos concerning proper policies and procedures, observing and talking with offenders, and also talking with Parole Board members gave me valuable insight into the system.

By shadowing parole agents and members of the Parole Board through my internship, I learned a tremendous amount concerning the criminal justice system in Pennsylvania. Concurrently, I learned as much concerning my future career goals. I realized that the harshness of the job and similar law enforcement positions were not for me. Being on the “front lines” in the criminal justice system is not my present career goal or interest. Rather than acting to control, supervise, or regulate individuals within the system, I discovered my desire is to understand the reasons for an individual’s criminal behavior. The realization of what I did not want to do was as important as realizing what I do desire.

(Jocelyn is currently a graduate student in the Department of Justice, Law and Society at American University.)

At the end of 2002, 2,698,806 people were confined in U.S. prisons and jails. This incarceration rate of 707 (per 100,000) makes the United States #1 in the world.

Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003

In Europe, women are granted 5 months’ leave at full pay after giving birth. In addition, they are provided prenatal and obstetrical care, generous hospital stays, and baby equipment subsidies.

Hewlett & West, 1998

The United States provides no paid leave to its citizens after giving birth.

24th Annual Mid-Atlantic Undergraduate Social Research Conference

Last April 13th students presented papers at the 23rd Annual Mid-Atlantic Undergraduate Social Research Conference. The upcoming conference is scheduled for April 2004 at Wilson College. Students in Methods, Theory and Seminar classes are encouraged to revise and submit papers for presentation. Your professors are happy to assist you in preparation for the conference. Conference presentations look great to employers and on graduate school applications.

New Sociology Courses

New courses available for Spring 2004:

- CRJ 3200-001 — Police and Society
  (Dr. Waegel T/R 2:30-3:45)
  Police are the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system and their decisions and actions can have enormous consequences for people’s lives. This course will examine the police role in contemporary society, the nature of police discretion, and how discretion is exercised in the handling of individual cases.

- SOC 4000-003 — Special Topics: America and Sociological Imagination
  (Dr. Juliani M 2:00-4:00)
  Since the events of September 11th, 2001, America has entered an unprecedented era of reflection, introspection, and debate. What have we learned about ourselves? This course uses the “sociological imagination” to examine the impact and influence of America’s mass media and politics on the rest of the world.
Economic Performance under Democratic Regimes in Latin America in the Twenty-First Century.
Edited by Dr. Lowell S. Gustafson and Dr. Satya R. Pattnayak

This book length collection of essays explores and evaluates the structural dimensions of Latin America’s unique experience with democracy over the last ten years. The Economic Performance under Democratic Regimes in Latin America in the Twenty-first Century illustrates the importance of understanding democratic re-emergence within historical, economic, cultural, and social contexts.

This collaborative publishing effort analyzes why Latin America’s democracies had to abandon a state-centered developmental strategy in order to confront a number of social problems, such as poverty and inequality. The contributors provide both a theoretical and anecdotal look at the documented successes and failures of democracy. The book also includes recent studies comparing the emerging industrial states of Argentina, Chile, and Mexico with similar states in East Asia. Concurrently, the work addresses practical developmental options for Latin American countries facing the rapidly increasing shift towards globalization.

“The book’s singular achievement lies in the contributors’ rigorous, exhaustive, and detailed analysis of the conditions under which democratic regimes in this continent have been erected. Furthermore, in a very solid way the book alerts us to the threats that loom around the democratic progress, due to the extreme income inequality, poverty, the lack of healthcare and education, and environmental degradation.”
-Dr. Fernando Pozos Ponce
Universidad de Guadalajara

“Not In Our Name”
Kate Lowenstein speaks at Villanova October 24th

Kate Lowenstein, from Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation (MVFR), will be speaking at Villanova on their opposition to Capital Punishment. MVFR is a national organization, which opposes capital punishment in all cases, and its purpose is to abolish the death penalty. “Our opposition to the death penalty is rooted in our direct experience of loss and our refusal to respond to that loss with a quest for more killing.”

Founded in 1976, MVFR is comprised of family members of both homicide victims and the families’ of those executed. This non-religious and non-partisan organization’s members are of diverse faiths, races, socio-economic status and geographical location. They support programs and policies which address the victims’ families’ needs, lower homicide rates and encourage crime prevention.

“After a murder, victims’ families face two things: a death and a crime. At these times, families need help to cope with their grief and loss, and support to heal their hearts and rebuild their lives. From experience, we know that revenge is not the answer. The answer lies in reducing violence, not causing more death. The answer lies in supporting those who grieve for their lost loved ones, not creating more grieving families. It is time we break the cycle of violence. To those who say society must take a life for a life, we say: “not in our name.”
-Marie Deans
Founder of Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation

In the United States, from one-third to one-half of large central cities have lost population over the past 25 years.

Ingram, 1998
Should We Care About the Deficit?
by Robert DeFina, Ph.D.

The recent news that next year’s federal budget deficit will top one-half trillion dollars raised alarms in some quarters and a simple shrug in others. What’s going on? Can budget deficits cause problems and, if so, how?

The federal government runs a deficit whenever it spends more than it receives in tax monies. It finances the difference by borrowing from whoever is willing to lend it money. This borrowing has a cost—the federal government is using up available savings that otherwise could have gone towards the purchase of new homes, new technology and equipment, and higher education. But the borrowing also can produce benefits, depending on how the borrowed money is spent. Federal spending for better roads, public schools, food stamps, and health and nutrition programs, among other things, can all produce significant social gains. In one sense, then, whether or not deficits are a problem depends on how the borrowed money is spent, and how large the gains are compared to the costs.

There is also a distributional aspect to the issue. The gainer and losers produced by the deficit might not be the same individuals. Indeed, because the costs of the deficits are likely to be felt in the future (e.g., less future housing and technology) while the gains are likely to be enjoyed now (e.g., better current health programs), the winners and losers could even be in different generations. Even if the costs of the deficit exceed the benefits in raw dollar terms, one might give greater weight to the benefits, perhaps because they accrue to more vulnerable members of society. In that case, it would make sense to run the deficit. How one weighs the gains and loses of the different groups is difficult and clearly open to debate.

There is a final dimension to the issue. Deficits could cause problems if they cumulate to such a large total debt that the government is in danger of default. In this case, the government would either be unable to borrow or would have to pay an extraordinarily high interest rate because it had become such a bad credit risk. Such a scenario does not seem realistic in the foreseeable future.

The bottom line is that there is no simple answer to whether deficits are problematic or not. It all depends on how the money is spent, and on who pays and who gains. These factors change with each new federal budget.

Dr. DeFina