Greetings to all! The department has recently had a changing of the guard. After eleven years at the helm, Dr. Tom Arvanites has stepped down as chairperson. His well-deserved rest from administrative concerns will allow him to once again devote his full energies to teaching and research, and to serve the department, College and Universities in new ways. Dr. Arvanites’ tenure as department head was marked by his deep concern for the welfare of its students and faculty members. Under his leadership, the department continued to grow and improve, including the hiring of new faculty members and changes in the curriculum. Dr. Arvanites has left the department in good shape and we all thank him for his steadfast dedication and hard work.

As the new chairperson, I am thrilled at the opportunity to help the department and its programs continue to advance. These early stages have been a bit crazy but also fun as there is much to learn and many people to meet. This especially includes students. I have really enjoyed meeting our majors as they come in for advising. I would also like to invite you to just stop in and say hi, so that I can get to know you and hear about your plans. In the coming semesters, the department will continue to explore different ways to strengthen the sociology and criminal justice degrees. These include re-evaluating our course offerings and requirements, redesigning our website to have more student resources, developing more opportunities for student-faculty research, and increasing the range of internships and alumni mentoring available. It’s all very exciting and I strongly encourage you to participate by offering ideas and feedback.

I hope everyone has a great semester and please let me know if I can assist you in any way.

Dr. Robert DeFiná

Criminal Justice Students in Action

Several students in Dr. McCormick’s Sociology of Law and Punishment & Society courses are doing legal research on Pennsylvania’s response to the recent US Supreme Court ruling in Miller v. Alabama which declared juvenile life without possibility of parole sentences unconstitutional.

Nick Grassi, Rachel Gladys, Catrina Muffoletto, Molly Sapia, Louise Campbell, Grant Chemidlin, and Angelica Lieto spent the first few days of the semester in court, attending a hearing for Giovanni Reid and Carlton Bennett, who were each convicted at the age of 16 for a murder in which neither was the triggerman.

Students will continue to participate in scheduled court hearings over the course of the semester.
My Experience at New York County Family Court
by Nicole Accurso ’13

I imagined it would be something that you would see on Judge Judy. People coming in, without lawyers, bickering back and forth about insignificant matters. And just like that, the judge would rule in favor of one party, and quickly dismiss them both. As a criminal justice major, I should have known better, but then again I have never truly experienced the civil side of the justice system. My internship at New York County Family Court this past summer really opened my eyes to such issues. A few of my expectations were confirmed; however, I also learned a great deal in those eight weeks.

Located in downtown Manhattan, New York County Family Court is a large gray building comprised of eleven floors. The court employs judges, referees, lawyers, court officers, clerks, and administrative personnel, while also housing various agencies, such as Child Protective Services. Family court matters include cases of custody, orders of protection, and juvenile delinquency, just to name a few. The courthouse is divided into parts, as each part deals with different issues. They do this because there are far too many cases for one or two judges to handle.

During my time at New York County Family Court, I was placed in Part 48, which heard custody battles and orders of protection cases. I sat next to the referee (who is almost like a judge), which was awesome to say the least. I got to see everything happen from a judge’s point of view, instead of someone just in the “audience.” I observed trials, took notes, helped the clerk call the cases, and did research on laws and policies. I loved watching each case, because although they involved the same central issues, each one was so different. There was a story behind every person that came in, and I had the chance to read about them in the petitions and listen to them when they spoke. Some of the cases ranged from being funny to downright bizarre. But most of the things I heard in family court were extremely saddening. I remember during orientation on the first day, one of the judges told the interns that people come to family court fighting for the two things that are most important to them: their money and their children. Boy, was she right. I’ve never seen such passion and high intensity in one setting before.

As cliché as it sounds, this experience made me realize how lucky I am to have a great family, wonderful friends, and my Villanova education. Many of the people I encountered faced family problems, suffered from poor living conditions, and lived in constant fear of losing what they hold dear. I witnessed twelve-year-olds being led into court in handcuffs, and their families seemed not to care what happened to them. I sympathized with these children and realized that their life circumstances and troubles at home contributed to their delinquency. There were also people who walked in who I sorely disliked (to say the least) because they beat their children or raped their wives. These instances made the whole experience more real for me. And after the first day in family court, I understood that family and civil matters were in fact nothing like Judge Judy, but far more widespread and serious.

Internships are great ways to gain experience and make connections. They are incredibly valuable to one’s future. This fall, I’m participating in an internship in Philadelphia at the Pretrial Services Warrant Unit. Instead of seeing what happens in the courtroom, I am exposed to everything that happens before trial, such as the investigations process. I know that both internships, combined with the classes I’ve taken at Villanova, are allowing me to develop a holistic view of the justice system, while also giving much more meaning to my major.
Drs. Robert DeFina and Lance Hannon are currently working on two research projects. The first is an assessment of the relationship between skin tone and school suspension using a national sample of African American youth. The second project involves conducting a comparison of interviewer-assessed skin tone measures with those derived from scientific/medical instruments.

Dr. Kelly Welch is co-authoring a paper on the degree to which racially exclusive conceptions of youth affect attitudes toward criminal and juvenile punishment using national survey data.

Drs. Allison Payne and Kelly Welch are working together to study ethnic threat in schools. They are using the School Survey on Crime and Safety to explore whether the Hispanic composition of a student body determines the extent and type of student discipline used in a school.

In addition, Dr. Allison Payne is working in collaboration with a few undergraduate students on a study examining the relationship between commitment to and involvement in various school activities and student delinquency and victimization. Previous research is unclear about this relationship, suggesting that it may be dependent upon the type of activity in which a student engages, and we are using the National Educational Longitudinal Study to explore this.

Drs. Tom Arvanites and Lance Hannon are investigating the effect of residential segregation on the incarceration rate of African Americans for drug offenses.

Drs. Bernard Gallagher and Brian Jones have initiated a new stage of their long-term study of the causes of schizophrenia with the assistance of the departmental Research Associate, Mariana Pardes. They are presently examining the relative strength of genes and environmental stressors on the subtypes of schizophrenia.

In addition, Dr. Brian Jones recently published Social Capital in America, an analysis of trends in work, voluntary association, social networks and family life. He is currently writing a second volume which incorporates key social-psychological attitudes—job satisfaction, trust, happiness and marital satisfaction—that accompany Americans’ investments in social capital.

Dr. Emmanuel David is studying identity, culture, and the social construction of gender at global outsourcing sites. Dr. David is currently a Fulbright Scholar in the Philippines, where he is interviewing call center agents about their lives in the outsourcing industry.

Dr. Rick Eckstein is participating in a collaborative research project with students on sports’ role in students’ college selection process, the relationship between new sports stadiums and criminalizing homelessness, and the political economy of college athlete burnout. In the near future, Dr. Eckstein will resume work on Sports Sucks, a sociological analysis of non-professional sports.

Dr. Joe McFalls is working on a monograph on mortality that will be entitled The Demography of Death. Mortality is one of the three major processes in demography. This monograph will advance knowledge concerning mortality in both the more-developed and less-developed worlds, improve population projections, and contribute to sounder social and demographic policy.

Dr. Emmanuel David received a Fulbright research fellowship! He is one of approximately 1,100 U.S. faculty and professionals who have traveled abroad through the 2012-2013 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program.

Dr. Rick Eckstein is the recipient of the 2012 Excellence in Teaching Award for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences! Rick received the unanimous vote of the Teaching Award Committee.

Weddy Worjroh (’12), a recent graduate in Sociology and Global Interdisciplinary Studies, was awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship and will be teaching next year in Argentina.

Dr. Allison Payne has been appointed Associate Director of the Honors Program. She will continue teaching in the Sociology and Criminal Justice department while also helping the Honors Director set the academic and strategic priorities of the Honors Program.
Faculty Scholarship Update

Dr. Donna Shai is in the process of completing a research article on women’s homicides in Philadelphia. Dr. Shai’s central aim is to check for media distortion bias by studying newspaper coverage of homicides by race and age. In addition, Dr. Shai is investigating fatal and non-fatal fire-related injuries in Anchorage, Alaska.

Dr. Jill McCorkel's upcoming book, Breaking Women: Race, Gender, and the New Politics of Punishment, will be available Spring 2013. It presents a detailed, critical examination of "get tough" punishment policies in women’s prisons. In addition, she has begun collecting data for two new projects. The first is a study of juvenile lifers following the Supreme Court’s decision in Miller v. Alabama. The second is a comparative study of men's and women's experiences following release from prison.

Our newest addition to the department, Dr. Rory Kramer, is working on two research projects related to racial residential segregation. The first is an attempt to improve measures of evenness in multiracial contexts using a novel entropy-based index of segregation. The second uses spatial analysis to shift the focus of the study from the neighborhood itself to the impact of physical boundaries on the (im)permanence of local residential segregation in Philadelphia between 1990 and 2010.

Dr. Peter Knapp is working on discontinuous processes of social mobilization such as Occupy Wall Street. He presented a version of this work at the American Sociological Association meeting this past August.

Dr. Pattnayak’s Sabbatical Project: India’s Growing Pain and Power

I’m currently in India conducting interviews with a cross-section of elites based in major cities to get a sense of where the country may be heading. Recently, India has experienced phenomenal economic growth as well as serious levels of conflict between social groups. Many studies have attempted to explain this scenario by examining factors such as party fragmentation, capture of the Indian state by diverse elements, and mobilization of the lower castes. Yet, few have contemplated that economic dynamism in selected sectors may be directly correlated with high social deprivation and conflict.

My current research is part of a larger book that takes stock of India’s rising hard and soft power, measures the country’s economic, social, and political vulnerabilities, and has taken a tentative position that strength in one is correlated with greater vulnerability in another. While considerable study has already been completed, this research has largely been conducted at the aggregate level. What is missing is city-level data on key economic, political, and social indicators, including those on elite networks. Cities are important because of the urban character of India’s economic expansion as well as its heightened social conflict and political competition.

Important questions in my work include: Is there an elite network? How do religious, political, and cultural elites communicate with each other? How do they diffuse social and inter-ethnic tensions? Such data may corroborate or contradict much of the existing research.