A Message from the Chair

I would like to acknowledge the following students who presented their research at the Eastern Sociological Society’s annual meeting on February 25 in Philadelphia: William Cuomo, Mike D’Antonio, Jaclyn DiScala, Kelly Donovan, Alexandra Frantz, Amanda Hostler, Warren Howe, Zach LeBlanc, Jennifer Maez, Mary Anna McCabe, Claire Mulhern, Ellen Parsons, Alissa Ricci, David Roman, Garrett Scanlon, and Christina Vilella. Best Poster winner Kelly Donovan deserves a special “shout-out.”

You should all be very proud of yourselves for participating in this conference. Please thank Drs. Eckstein, Jones, and Payne for their encouragement and assistance. This experience will be a wonderful addition to your resume. There will be another poster session on campus in April. Details of this poster session are located on page 4 of this newsletter.

Advising for Fall 2011 begins on March 11. Sophomores should make every effort to complete their Theory and Methods requirements in their junior year.

On behalf of my colleagues, I offer congratulations to the seniors leaving us in May. Many of your professors have written recommendation letters for life after Villanova. Please keep us updated on your activities and endeavors. Future cohorts of sociology and criminal justice majors often benefit from experiences previous graduates share with them.

—Dr. Thomas Arvanites

My Personal Experience as a Prison Literacy Tutor

By Kristina Wotton

I volunteered as a tutor at Graterford in the Fall of my sophomore year and have been trying to go back ever since. My experience at Graterford has been paradigm shifting. I began the program with the presupposition that all of the inmates were violent, uneducated, and simply unwilling to be a productive part of society. Over the weeks, I realized that all of those preconceived notions were unfounded and false. The men in the Prison Literacy Program are respectful and hard working; they want to turn their lives around and be better people and I am honored to have helped them on their way. The media and society have created this idea that all inmates are innately bad people who do not deserve to be a part of the general public again.

My experience has helped me realize that it is possible for criminals to change into educated, respectful, and honest men who will one day be productive members of society. The Prison Literacy Program is an incredible program for both the inmates and the student tutors. The entire experience changed the way I think of the prison system and the people who are a part of it. It is an experience that I will carry with me into my career and the rest of my life.

Editor’s Note: Every semester, approximately ten Villanova students participate in the Prison Literacy Program tutoring inmates at The State Correctional Institution at Graterford, Pennsylvania’s largest maximum security prison. If you are interested in becoming a tutor at Graterford, contact Dr. Thomas Arvanites for more information.
The Washington Center: Internship Programs in Washington, D.C.

By Nicole Accurso

There is no better way to start off your career than with an internship. At The Washington Center, internships will help you develop the skills needed to succeed in the “real world.” You will build confidence because you will be immersed with professionals. Instead of being assigned insignificant tasks, you will be working among these professionals in whichever field you choose. You will even create a portfolio, in which you will document, analyze, and evaluate each and every experience. Not only will this provide others with details about what you’ve done, but it will give you satisfaction and a huge sense of accomplishment. By having an internship at The Washington Center, your eyes will open up to the talents you never knew you had. You will be challenged and discover new ways of thinking and communicating.

No matter what your areas of interest are, you can find a program for you at the Washington Center. The programs include Political Leadership, Business and Management, Law and Criminal Justice, Media and Communication, and Advocacy, Service, and Arts, among so many others. Alumni of The Washington Center have leadership positions in virtually every profession. In addition to the actual internship, there is an academic course component. Taking classes that complement your internship gives you the chance to receive college credit and get the most out of the whole experience as possible. The Washington Center is unique in this regard because it integrates academics with real-world experience.

One of the best parts about this program is the fact that it is located in one of the most fascinating cities in the country. Washington, D.C. is an excellent place that combines entertainment with learning and working. The Washington Center houses students in furnished apartments in the heart of D.C., therefore immersing them with the great people living and working there. A few other benefits of the program include its year-round operation, with fall and spring semesters and even a summer term, and its commitment to giving financial assistance. The Washington Center allows more than 75 percent of interns to receive financial aid. The Washington Center truly tries to make it possible for anyone to be a part of such a wonderful experience. To learn more about The Washington Center, read one of their many brochures, or visit their website at www.twc.edu.

Sociology Professor Featured Lecturer for One Day University

Dr. Brian Jones, professor of Sociology at Villanova, was recently a featured lecturer for One Day University. The program, which began in 2006, is a single day event, usually on a Saturday or Sunday when four popular teachers from top universities across the country each give a 70-minute lecture. The event is held several times a year in various cities across the country. In the past, One Day University has featured distinguished professors from some of the world’s top schools including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Columbia. The professors deliver lectures in a wide variety of topics including international law, politics, sociology, art, music, theatre, and history. On average, each One Day University is attended by several hundred people and the average age of a student participant is 59 years old. The program is intended to provide a unique educational experience to adults eager to learn from some of the world’s top professors, without the high price and commitment that comes with higher education.

On October 3, 2010, Dr. Jones was a featured lecturer in the One Day University held at New York University. In his lecture “Is America on the Decline? No—and Yes,” Dr. Jones argued that the center of our everyday activities occurs in four key zones of social life: family, work, group memberships, and social networks. Using 35 years of research, Dr. Jones examined this four-chambered heart of American society.
Putting Your BA Degree to Work
By Jacki Diana, Class of 2009

As the graduation countdown begins, whether gladly or with reservation, the search to find a job greatly intensifies. Looking for and applying to jobs is a scary thing. I was there not too long ago. I graduated from Villanova in 2009, and I did not know what I was going to do after graduation. The questions I found myself asking were: “What do I want to do with my life?”, “What if I can’t find a job?”, and even “What if I hate the job I get?” These questions are not uncommon and you are not alone. Many people are in the same position. In my experience, networking is what ultimately helped me get my job.

I currently work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) out of Newark, New Jersey as a Research Analyst. I would not have this job if not for the many relationships I have sustained throughout my life. By talking to friends, family, and colleagues, I was able to network and get the word out that I was looking for a job. If I could give any advice it would be to network and use the resources available to you, not only in your job hunt, but throughout life. The relationships you’ve made, and will continue to make, are great assets to you in both the personal and professional aspects of your life.

Writing is a large part of my career. Everything I do needs to be documented, and if it does not meet certain standards it will not be accepted. I truly believe my extensive course load and curriculum allow me to do my job to my greatest ability. The emphasis placed on writing, even if tedious at the time, has benefited me greatly. While many writing courses focus on academic writing, the courses offered to me focused more on analytical, research-based writing which is what is used in the “real world”. The countless research papers I spent hours writing are some of the few things from college I still use today. While history and math are important, without writing skills we would not be able to communicate, especially in the working world. People are often too busy to discuss work face-to-face so written communication, whether e-mails or reports, are how information is documented and exchanged.

Many people in my position struggle with the writing aspect of the job; However, thanks to my experiences at Villanova, I have adjusted very easily to the working world. While I miss my college days, thanks to the education I received, I am prepared for whatever is thrown my way.

Editor’s Note: Jacki Diana will be a featured speaker at the Career Event for Sociology and Criminal Justice Majors on April 7th.

New Faculty Research on Female Homicide
By Dr. Donna Shai

Although I have always been an avid newspaper reader, it’s only recently that I became aware of how strongly newspaper articles can influence how we see the world around us. When editors choose which stories to publish and which to ignore, usually referred to as “selection bias,” they can shape our feelings of safety and danger, particularly in the coverage of murders. In my new research, I concentrate on female homicides since they are often overshadowed by the much larger number of male homicides. I focus on how female homicides in Philadelphia were portrayed in the Philadelphia Inquirer from 1999 to 2008, using LexisNexis Academic and the FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports. My preliminary findings show that the majority of deaths were not covered at all, while others had as many as 40 articles and more than twenty-five thousand words written about them. Who gets the most coverage and how does that affect our perception of violence? Out of 392 cases with female victims, nearly one-third (126), were “intimate homicides” in which a woman was killed by a boyfriend, husband or common-law husband. Of these only about one-fifth (24) were publicized. In the relatively rare event that a female was killed by a stranger (17), more than half of the events (9) were publicized. These editorial decisions can take attention away from some serious problems of violence to women and cause us to fear what is actually a rare event—an attack by a total stranger. I am looking forward to analyzing these data from a broad number of dimensions through statistical analysis, in order to learn how the publicized cases are different from those that never come to light for the general public.

Editor’s Note: Dr. Shai is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Villanova. Her research interests include demography of family life and unintentional injury.

More events to look for...

Villanova’s Annual Fritz Nova Lecture
PANDORA’S WELL: DEREGULATIONS, FOSSIL FUELS, AND THE BP OIL DISASTER IN THE GULF
with:
Dr. Anthony Ladd
Professor of Sociology at Loyola University New Orleans
Thursday, March 10, 7:30 p.m., Free and Open to the Public

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT BEING GAY

Come hear recent Villanova graduates and others talk about their experiences on what it is like to be gay, as well as current issues facing the gay community today.
Thursday, April 14th, 4:00-5:30 p.m.
Mendel Hall 154
Sponsored by the SOC/CJ Department, the Office of Student Life, and the Gay-Straight Coalition
All are Welcome!
This past January, alumna Monica McDermott returned to campus as the keynote speaker for the 2011 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. Her talk, entitled “Sports, Shooting and Scholarship: Myths of African-American Upward Mobility,” was attended by over 600 students, faculty, staff and visitors.

McDermott graduated summa cum laude in ’93 with a bachelor’s degree in history and sociology. She is now an assistant professor of sociology at Stanford University. Her research focuses on the intersection of race and class in the contemporary United States.

As an undergraduate at Villanova, McDermott recalled taking a research seminar in social science with Dr. Brian Jones, which sparked her interest in sociology.

“My two favorite memories of college are taking honors courses and discovering sociology,” said McDermott. She was also heavily involved in a number of activities affiliated with the Center for Peace and Justice Education, including Student Coalition Against Racism and Democrat Socialists.

McDermott’s keynote speech highlighted the ways in which black men are socialized to pursue certain occupations based on society’s expectations and stereotypes of what they can and should do to earn a living. Such occupations, including becoming a professional athlete or serving in the military, are prescribed as socially acceptable routes to upward mobility for black men.

She cited a number of studies documenting the pervasive societal belief that black men possess natural physical strength and talent above all else. Such ideology leads black men to believe that the pursuit of careers in sports and the military will allow them to become upwardly mobile. This is especially true in the case of poor black men, who see these occupations as their way out of the ghetto.

For example, black males are 2.5 times more likely to play high school basketball than white males. Black males have repeatedly been found to be more likely than white males to participate in high school athletics with the expectation of an athletic scholarship at an institution of higher education and/or a professional career in sports. However, this is a myth: less than 3 percent will obtain athletic scholarships in football. In more general, black men are overrepresented as student-athletes on college campuses. At Villanova, approximately 37 percent of black male students received an athletic scholarship for the 2009-2010 school year. Nationwide, the college graduation rate for black males is 38% and increases to 48% for athletes. In more selective schools, such as Villanova, black non-athletes often graduate at higher rates.

Given that the University is considering the possibility of moving the football program up to the Division I-A level, her talk was even more pertinent. In order to join the Big East conference as a Division I-A football team, the University is required to add 22 athletic scholarships in football. In addition, the University must add 22 athletic scholarships in women’s sports, according to the mandates of Title IX.

During the question and answer session that followed McDermott’s speech, many students inquired as to the University’s role in perpetuating stereotypes of black men as athletes.

This question is especially important as it relates to career opportunities for black men in general, as well as those who attend college on an athletic scholarship. Blacks are underrepresented in a number of occupations, including CEOs, civil engineers, lawyers, professors, and physicians. The select few who become professional athletes number mere 27,000.

McDermott pointed out that the average career of an NFL player lasts 3.3 years with earnings of $2,541,000, while the average career of a lawyer is 40 years with earnings of $4,529,600. The differences are striking, she said.

In closing, McDermott stated that society needs to focus on providing opportunities for young black men to use, and profit from, their intelligence in the form of education and employment.

“There’s an unfortunate stereotype that black men are gifted with their bodies, not their minds, and I hope my talk counters that,” said McDermott.