

SOCIENEWS

MARCH 2010

COUNCIL ON THE MIDDLE EAST BY RACHEL TAYLOR

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- New Courses
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- Faculty and Student Scholarships
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The University System of Georgia Middle East Council's second annual Student Middle East Symposium will be held on Saturday, April 17 2010 at Georgia College and State University. Dr. Neema Noori and four of his students, Eric Cole, Cass Carter, Cheryl Nye, and Sean Bickell will all be part of the program. This symposium aims to bring together young scholars from across the USG and beyond for a day of intellectual and creative exchange centered around issues pertaining to the Middle East, including North Africa and Central Asia. "It is an honor to be selected" says Dr. Noori and

the four UWG students show promise in the papers they will present. The Department of International Services and Programs volunteered to fund the registration and travel costs for the Middle East Symposium. Sessions will begin at 10 a.m. and continue until 5:30 p.m. It will include a catered lunch of Middle Eastern food and cultural programming. Also included in the program is a belly dancing class.

Of the nineteen participants, our own West Georgia students will be sure to add to the diversity of topics in the six

thematic panels. Each panel has a moderator who is an expert in their respected area. Cheryl Nye will present her paper, "The Many Textured Tapestry of Identity in Beirut" in the Second Panel: Ancient History and Modern Identity. Sean Bickell and Cass Carter will both present in the Fourth Panel: Iran. in which Dr. Noori is the moderator. Sean's paper is



entitled "Information Warfare in Iran" and Cass developed a topic entitled "Comparative Analysis of American and Iranian Policies towards Transgender Individuals." Eric Cole will present in the Fifth Panel: Minorities and Economic Development in the Middle East. His

paper is entitled "Understanding Imperial and Corporate Control of Natural Resources: Is Water the New Oil for Saudi Arabia?" There are no awards or winners in this program because it is not competitive. Just being selected is an achievement. Dr. Noori stated that "the purpose is to get feedback and learn about the Middle East." Sean, Cass, Eric, and Cheryl show so much promise for the future. Special thanks to Dr. Noori whose encouragement and expertise makes diverse programs such as The Student Middle East Symposium possible.

FALL 2009 SOCIOLOGY GRADUATES

Derrien Quinton Dennis

Stephanie Nicole Elliott

Michelle Leigh Estes

Amanda Marie Gilbert

Tori Hymes

Laura Beth Jordan



Carla Matthews

Whitney Maria Smith

Brandon Stapp

Maria Wright

Chelsy Yarbrough

MS. WHEELCHAIR GEORGIA USA 2010 BY KRISTEN WEST

Most people have a goal or a passion which they hope to someday achieve. Ashley Woll's passion and goal is to bring awareness of individuals living with disabilities and to advocate on their behalf. Over the years she has brought awareness to many, but just recently she has received the title of Ms. Wheelchair Georgia USA 2010 in the pageant competition Ms. Wheelchair USA. The Ms. Wheelchair USA pageant is a fairly new organization. It is one of only two pageants for women in wheelchairs in the United States. With that being said, this title has been a major accomplishment in her eyes. With this title she has been given the opportunity to raise awareness nationwide. Yet, earning this title was not an easy process. In order to be selected as a mere candidate for the position as Ms. Wheelchair Georgia USA, she had to complete an extensive application, accumulate two recommendation letters, and present a platform statement in which she discussed what she would do to achieve the aims of that platform. Her platform statement is as follows: "To advocate for disabled individuals who find that their needs are not being met in our society on the local, state, national and political levels." She believes her duties as Ms. Wheelchair Georgia USA 2010 are to implement this statement to the best of her abilities. So far she has begun to volunteer throughout the community and has contacted high ranking officials to help improve situations that affect individuals with disabilities. You can find Ashley's picture and mission statement as the Ms. Wheelchair Georgia USA 2010 representative at the following webpage: <http://www.mswheelchairusa.org/page4a.html>.



SOCIOLOGICAL COLLECTIVE

BY ADRIENNE REEVES

With having been rejuvenated this year by the enthusiasm of Dr. Hunt and its president, Evan Reynolds, the Sociological Collective has been quite busy. As an active member of the club, I am extremely proud of how these two individuals have been able to organize and revive this once disorganized club.

So far this school year we have been able to participate in a range of activities in and around our community. For example, in October the club participated in the AIDS Walk in Piedmont Park where its members were able to share in the experience of bringing awareness of an often fatal disease. In addition to the walk,

the club has also partaken in providing a Thanksgiving meal for a Carroll County family as well as running a Toy Drive for children at Christmas. These minor contributions have enabled the club members to become involved in the community and to bond as an organization. In the future, we will be volunteering with Youth Villages Inner Harbour Campus in Douglasville, Georgia, working as mentors and tutors, among other things, for children and teens. Through this experience we hope to build relationships as well as to gain experience with working outside of the classroom. It is our goal to learn

as much from the children that we will be working with as they will learn from us.

Since the Sociological Collective is so new we are small and are looking to expand, especially since the majority of its members are graduating this spring. With that being said, we are looking to replace all of the officers and would love to welcome new members. If you or anyone you know is interested in joining the club please contact Dr. Hunt at phunt@westga.edu.

WHO IS RACHEL TAYLOR? BY KRISTEN WEST

Who is Rachel Taylor? She is a senior here at the University of West Georgia, a Sociology major, one of our very own *soci-News* writers, and a new inductee into the prestigious Who's Who honor program. West Georgia describes the Who's Who program "as one of the most highly respected and long standing honor programs in the nation. The selection of Who's Who is based on academic excellence, participation in extracurricular activities, community service and potential for



continued success." Rachel was ecstatic and honored to be nominated and actually inducted into the program. She exclaims, "I honestly did not think I would be inducted into the program. When I received the official letter in January of 2010, I could not believe it." It is a tremendous honor to be inducted into such a program and the Department of Sociology and Criminology is proud to acknowledge Rachel's accomplishments.

RESEARCH DAY



Research Day, presented by the Social Sciences Division, was held on March 4, 2010, and featured sixteen students from the departments of Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Criminology, and Anthropology. At 4 pm, fourteen research presentations took place in TLC room 1-305. Each student had the help of a faculty sponsor prior to the presentation and was allotted ten minutes for each presentation. First up from the Sociology/Criminology Department was Joshua Matthews, Criminology major. Dr. Catherine Jenks sponsored his topic entitled "Change in America's Health Care System: A Critical Analysis." Alana Berry of Sociology was sponsored by Dr. Pam Hunt and Dr. Laurel Holland. Alana presented her topic on "Content Analysis of Gender Roles and Violence in Modern Rock Versus Traditional Protestant Hymns." Dr. Pam Hunt was the sponsor of Joette Crews, Sociology, who presented her

topic on "United States Policy Towards the Borders: Misconceptions and Realities." Finally, Eric Cole of Criminology entitled his topic "Understanding Imperia and Corporate Control of Natural Resources: A Comparative Examination of Oil and Water in the Middle East" and was sponsored by Dr. Todd Matthews. Three lucky winners were awarded first, second and third place by four judges. The four judges were Dr. Jane McCandless, Sociology, Dr. Teresa Leslie, History, Dr. John Carter, Psychology, and Dr. Karl Steinen, Anthropology. Special thanks goes out to the judges as well as the Social Science Research Day Coordinators: Dr. Neil Korobov, Psychology, Dr. Sooho Lee, Political Science, and Dr. Paul Luken, Sociology. The follow up of Research Day will commence on April 1, 2010, for Big Night. This is the night when students fully explore research topics and present in-depth analyses of the area. Events such as Research Day and Big Night acknowledge extraordinary initiative and reward students who go above and beyond the call of duty.

~ **Rachel Taylor**

What began as a fascination is now developing into a Senior Thesis for sociology major Alana Berry, who has been working with Dr. Holland and Dr. Hunt to gain insight into a subject that she is extremely passionate about. In early fall 2009 she began researching the correlation between traditional protestant hymns and modern rock music to the themes each holds; she wanted to find out if the differing genres had similar messages in regards to their attitudes toward women. In order to tackle this task, Alana used the Feminist Theory Perspective as a structure for her research. Through this she was able to adopt the view that both types of music do indeed perpetuate a patriarchal status quo. Since her research has begun, Alana has been given the opportunity to present her material informally in class and, on a larger scale, at the annual meeting of the Georgia Sociological Association at Morehouse College and during Social Science Research Day at UWG. Each presentation is strengthened by her further knowledge and research into the subject matter. Through this experience Alana is not only getting to earn academic credit hours, but is getting to do so by researching a topic that she is genuinely interested in. This summer, Alana will pursue her research by taking a directed readings course with Dr. Holland, which will further her knowledge into sociological theories of religion. She will then combine this new information, her presentation from Research Day, a previous qualitative methods course, and previous independent research to form a completed senior thesis during summer semester. This experience will ultimately allow Alana to be more competitive in both the job market as well as for graduate school admissions because she has performed her own study, which she hopes one day will be published.

~ **Adrienne Reeves**

CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM BY DIXIE CURELY

CONTRIBUTORS: RACHEL TAYLOR, ODETTE ALLEN,
ADRIENNE REEVES AND KRISTEN WEST



I've been in a classroom setting for most of my life. I've sat through lectures, presentations, and soapbox tirades. I've suffered through math instruction, felt my brain come close to imploding in Astronomy presentations, and have been entranced through mythological tales.

I've noticed that there is a similarity to students in classrooms, no matter the subject. Some are quiet, some classrooms are painfully silent (I always feel so bad for the instructors in those classes—but damned if I'm going to speak up and be wrong as well), some have students that contribute insightfully, and others that contribute in ways that redefine the term obnoxious. Prior to transferring to UWG, I'd only experienced 'unsanctioned' debate in a classroom once (American Government...politics will do it to anyone).

As I've progressed through upper level Sociology courses, I've discovered that this is no longer the case. In some, not all, of my upper level Soc classes, I've noticed more debate (and at times out and out conflict) than any other upper level courses I've taken in other departments. For a department that at times seems like the hippie step-sister of the nearby Physics and Business departments, I've often been befuddled (and yes, I'll admit, at times immaturely amused) by this.

When I started writing this article, I wanted to know whose responsibility these conflicts and debates were. Students? Teachers? So my fellow *sociNews* contributors and I set out asking students and faculty their thoughts: Who is responsible? For the most part, the responses were similar: 1.) Professors should maintain control of their classrooms and 2.) Students should be mature enough to handle themselves appropriately. Okay, fair enough. I agree. However, this doesn't really answer the question. I then realized that these didn't answer the question because I was asking the wrong question all along. It doesn't matter who's responsible for the conflict but instead where it's coming from. So, where is it coming from? Is it coming from immature students that can't handle themselves? Instructors that cannot manage and control their classrooms? At times, yes. I've been in classrooms where some students have prepubescent maturity levels and some where the instructors were overwhelmed. But to be honest, this is rare. But the conflict is not...so again, where is it coming from? And then it hit me...the answer was right front of my eyes: The answer is simple: Sociology.

What? Sociology? Am I crazy? Well yes, a little bit, but that's beside the point. The cause of conflict and debate in our classrooms is the topic itself. As students of sociology we study poverty, marriage, healthcare, politics, and deviance. We study globalization, aging, equality, and the ways in which we interact with our environment. As sociology students we look at religion, war, emotions, interactions, structure, theory, and methods behind it all. I haven't even covered a fraction of the classes that we take or the topics that are taught in those classes, but look at the diversity. Think of all the things that we learn and talk about. Now, relate them to yourself, your family, and your world. It's easy isn't it? Easier than say...comparing the study of atoms, planets, and cellular studies to your family, yourself, and your world. This is where the conflict comes in: Conflict occurs in our classrooms because what we study is really the heart of the matter. Not that Sociology is any more or less important than other disciplines, but it is far more relatable. (Continued on page 6)

Special points of interest:

- Professors need to maintain control of the classroom
- Students should handle themselves in a proper and mature manner

TIME FOR ADVISEMENT

It is that time of the year again! Registration is right around the corner for the summer and fall semesters, and now is the time to schedule an advising appointment with Dr. Luken (678-839-6333; pluken@westga.edu), the advisor for all undergraduate sociology majors. If you use email, suggest several days and times that will work for you. It is important to be prepared before showing up to your advising appointment. Here is a basic checklist to ensure that you are ready for advising:

1. An updated degree evaluation. This can be found on the Registrar's office webpage: <http://www.westga.edu/~registra/>.

2. A list of courses in which you plan to register. Include the following:

- CRN
- Course Identification Number
- Section number
- Class days and times
- Credit hours

Some of you may have noticed the new "Wolf Watch" feature that has just come online. It will be a great help to students because it links the course requirements for graduation directly to the course offerings for each semester. Yet, since this program is still being tested, you may find problems with it. Do not be alarmed if "Wolf Watch" indicates that you have not met certain requirements when you know that you have done so. There are bugs that still need to be worked out.

Also, after this semester, Dr. Luken will not be the advisor to sociology and pre-sociology majors. Dr. Pam Hunt will be assuming the duties of academic advisor. You will be able to contact her at phunt@westga.edu.

CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM CONTI.

Oxford English Dictionary states that sociology is the "study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society." This is true, but entirely too simplistic. Sociology is the study of our family, ourselves (within these societies—not individually as that would be psychological), and our social surroundings. Sociology studies our lives and interactions—the beating heart of us and our worlds.

Isn't it only natural that when to discuss matters and issues that are so from different backgrounds come together, and beliefs are so strong they're expected?

This is where conflict truly level (though yes, this does occur but is grounds, a culture that encourages explores the good, the sullied, the seem-lives. No other discipline does this like strings, the core of our humanity quite like Sociology does.

So, how do we handle conflict in our classrooms? The answer for that has been previously answered: We as students need to handle ourselves in a mature, respectful manner and our instructors need to manage classrooms in a manner that encourages open discussion, but quashes negativity and disrespect. Or has it?

Is it that easy though? When someone speaks in opposition of something that you hold near and dear, can a mature and respectful response be guaranteed? What if the response to your statement is derogatory, negative, or immature? To be perfectly honest, sometimes a mature and respectful retort isn't always warranted. Or is it? What do you think? What creates conflict in the classroom and how should it be handled?

*"Sociology
Studies our
lives and
interactions"*

Think about it—what sociology studies is The how's, why's, and what's.

you put a group of diverse individuals in a room personal that conflict will arise? When people gether to discuss matters in which ideas, opin-seemingly linked to the soul, isn't conflict to be

arises from. Not lack of control or maturity rare in perspective) but from different back-sion and defense, and subject matter that ex-ingly mundane, and more dramatic parts of our Sociology. No other discipline pulls at the heart

NEW COURSES FOR SUMMER AND FALL

Dr. Johnson - Art in Corrections

This DSW (formerly WAC) course will focus on the use of artistic activities (painting and drawing, sculpture, music, drama, literature, crafts, etc.) in corrections today, including prisons, jails, community corrections, and juvenile facilities. Artistic activities include those conducted within formal programs as well as those conducted more spontaneously by individual artists. Students will critically examine research, theory, and practice on the educational, therapeutic, and institutional management functions of art in corrections, as well as the social significance of “prisoner art” as a genre. Art’s value as a tool in offender rehabilitation, victim and community reparation, and improving institutional conditions will be assessed.

Dr. Sawtell - Sociology of Sex and Gender

Gender and sex are so central to our lives and as such they often appear natural. In this course we step back from this natural attitude about sex and gender to investigate their social roots and meanings, and explore what it means to be a woman, man, boy, or girl in everyday life. The seminar explores current literature in the sociology of gender and addresses why society prescribes different gendered positions to females and males, how our identities are formed based on our sex, and how gendered beliefs affect the expectations, experiences, and opportunities of women and men. Gender is one of the most central axes of inequality, along with class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality (and this course will explore the intersectionality of these relationships) and will highlight a number of key areas: feminist theory; feminist methods; sexualities; identities; education; culture and bodies; violence; work and organizations; work in the global economy; families and relationships; welfare and welfare reform; crime, law, and punishment; and states and social movements.

Dr. Sawtell - Sex, Sexuality, and the Hookup Culture

Though we may perceive sex to be a natural and biologically driven behavior, sex is in fact largely shaped by social norms, values, and expectations. Sexuality and its components (desire, pleasure, love, and the body) is something more than a personal or individual characteristic - it is socially constructed. In this course, we explore how sexuality is constructed and examine theories, concepts, and cultural ramifications of a range of sexual practices and identities. This course will provide an introduction to many issues related to sexuality. We will examine how categories shape our understanding of sexuality such as being male/female, heterosexual/homosexual/queer, and explore a wide range of topics, including adolescent sexuality, prostitution, intersexuality and transgender issues, power, violence, sex in romantic and non-romantic relationships, sex work, sexuality in the media, sex education, pornography and politics.

Dr. Matthews - Poverty

Dr. Matthews will be offering a graduate seminar on Poverty in the Fall 2010 semester. This is a new graduate offering for Dr. Matthews and for the department, as he offered an undergraduate Poverty seminar in the Spring semester. He notes, “The course will have several key areas of focus, including an introduction on definitions and trends in poverty; social-scientific theories of poverty and inequality; urban and rural poverty; poverty and crime; the near or working poor; responses to poverty; and possible poverty policies. As a seminar, students will be expected to regularly present on and discuss both assigned and outside readings. There will also be a term paper and other projects designed to enhance student understanding of the complexities of poverty.”

FACULTY AND STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Baird, Andrew. 2009. "Progressive Education in Celebration, FL." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Berry, Alana. 2009. "Content Analysis of Gender Roles and Violence in Modern Rock versus Traditional Protestant Hymns." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Cole, Eric. 2009. "Petroleum Politics vs. Hydropolitics: A Comparative Analysis of Water and Oil Issues." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Cole, Eric. 2010. "Understanding Imperial and Corporate Control of Natural Resources: A Comparative Examination of Oil and Water in the Middle East." Southeastern Undergraduate Sociology Symposium (SEUSS), Emory University, Atlanta.

Holland, Laurel. 2009. "What's in a Name? Negotiating Same-Sex Parenting." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Matthews, Todd L. and Laurel Holland. 2009. "Exploring Perceptions of Water Issues and Public Efficacy in Carroll County, Georgia." *Mid South Sociological Association* meeting, Lafayette, LA.

Matthews, Todd L. and Laurel Holland. 2009. "Examining Differential Levels of Tolerance and Prejudice towards LGBT Individuals on the College Campus." *Mid South Sociological Association meeting*, Lafayette, LA.

Matthews, Todd L. 2009. "Poverty in Georgia: Examining County-Level Variations Using the ACS and SAIPE." *Georgia Sociological Association meeting*, Atlanta, GA.

McCandless, Jane, Laura Lutgen, and Sarah Knowles. 2009. "The Impact of a Failing Economy on the Needs of Victims of Violence." *American Society of Criminology*, Philadelphia, PA.

Noori, Neema. 2010. "The Globalization of the American Model of Education." Public presentation delivered at the University of West Georgia. Carrollton, GA.

Noori, Neema. 2010. [Review of the book *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the State*]. *The Digest of Middle East Studies*, (19) 1.

Noori, Neema. 2009. "Why Culture and Identity Matter Less than You Think: A Lecture on Culture, Identity, and Conflict in the Middle East." Public presentation delivered at the University of West Georgia. Carrollton, GA.

Noori, Neema. 2009. "Rethinking the Legacies of the Iran-Iraq war: Veterans, the Basij, and Social Resistance in Iran." Invited as a guest speaker, *Teaching the Middle East VII: Identities and New Realities in the Middle East*. Workshop organized by Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College, Atlanta, Georgia.

Luken, Paul. "Introduction to Institutional Ethnography." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta, October, 2009.

Parsons, Tiffany. 2009. "Transitioning from Homelessness: An Institutional Ethnography." Georgia Sociological Association, Morehouse College, Atlanta.

Schott-Ceccacci, Melinda, Laurel Holland and Todd L. Matthews. 2009. "Attitudes towards the LGBT Community in Higher Education." *Spaces for Difference* 2(1):37-47.



Paul Luken, Andrew Baird, and Tiffany Parsons at the Georgia Sociological Association conference

We're on the web!

www.westga.edu/soccrim/

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The "sociNews" wants to hear from you. Tell us what you have been up to, and what you think of the "sociNews." We are always interested in new story ideas and in improving the quality of the newsletter. And if you would be interested in working on the newsletter, you will find that there is plenty to do. Contact Dr. Luken at pluken@westga.edu.