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Humanities Café 2013-2014

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice organized the Humanities Café, which is an ongoing series of presentations designed to connect the academic work of ISU professors with various community collaborators in the Pocatello area. The theme of this year’s series was Exploring Gender and Sexuality.

Altogether, the Department organized five sets of presentations on topics such as gender and sexual violence prevention, sex positivity, and cultural developments related to religion and sexuality. Presenters from our department included Assistant Professors Candace Christensen and Jeremy Thomas, Professor Emeritus Jim Aho, and graduate student Jodi Dunn. All of the events were held at the Portneuf Valley Brewery and were accompanied by excellent attendance from a diverse range of persons from both the university and community. We are proud of our presenters and feel that this year's series did an excellent job of showcasing the capabilities and talents of our Department!

Tenth Annual Gender and Sexuality in Everyday Life Conference

The ISU College of Arts and Letters co-sponsored the Tenth Annual Art of Gender and Sexuality in Everyday Life conference on March 3-4, 2014. Faculty members in our department with expertise in sexuality and gender studies served on the conference planning committee. The conference was very successful with over 200 attendees. Dr. Lisa Diamond (University of Utah) was the keynote speaker, and presenters included faculty and/or students from California State University at Northridge, Harvard University Medical School, Idaho State University, University of Louisville, University of Utah, and Westminster College.

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Idaho State University-Dept of Sociology, Social Work, & Criminal Justice
GO FAR!

Featured in National Social Work Magazine

The GO FAR! framework, which was developed by the ISU Social Work program and encourages social work students and practitioners to be genuine, express optimism, have fun, be accountable, and base their work in rigor (ethics, research, theory, and critical thinking), was featured in New Social Worker magazine.

The Facebook version of the paper has received numerous positive comments from around the country and over 800 “likes.”

Faculty Research Highlights

Teresa Casey is completing a program evaluation of the Bannock County Youth Development Center. She presented preliminary findings at the American Society of Criminology conference in Atlanta in November 2013.

Gesine Hearn is analyzing data from a survey on post-deployment processes and issues of veterans in Idaho, and updating several papers based on research projects with student-athletes. She also has two invited book chapters coming out soon, one for the Routledge Handbook of Medical Anthropology and one for a book called 'Sociology for the Curious: Why Study Sociology' (co-authored with Lauren Crosby).

Staci Jensen-Hart holds the $1.2 million Idaho Department of Health and Welfare child welfare training academy contract, which was renewed this spring.

Jeehoon Kim presented research findings on older adults' information and technology use and their health status at the Gerontological Society of America and Society for Social Work and Research conferences with support from an internal travel grant.

Along with co-investigators in Political Science and History, Katrina Running received funding for an upcoming project to survey local residents about their use of the Portneuf River as part of the EPSCoR MILES (Managing Idaho’s Landscapes for Ecosystem Services) project. She also published an article about citizenship identities and concern for global warming in Social Forces.

Jeremy Thomas published the lead article in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. Dr. Thomas' work was also discussed in various popular media outlets including the Boston Globe, National Public Radio affiliate, WCAI, Cape and Islands NPR, thesocietypages.org, and msnbc.com.

Visiting Assistant Professor

This fall and for the spring we welcome Heeuk (Dennis) Lee as a Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) in our department. Dennis is coming to us from the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University. He is teaching four classes including Policing in America, Race and Crime, Social Diversity and Social Problems.

A Sample of Student Successes

Debra Bischoff coauthored a narrative study on capital punishment from a convict criminology perspective with D J Williams and Teresa Casey that was published the journal Critical Criminology.

Tommy Abend received the College Graduate Student Scholarship from the College of Arts and Letters.

Graduating senior Alma Jam received the department’s Saraf Duncan scholarship.

Lauren Crosby and Rachel Rowan successfully defended their theses and obtained their MA degrees in Sociology.

Laura Whaley participated in an ISU Study Abroad program and spent last Thanksgiving in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico helping at an orphanage.

Travis Stephens received a competitive award through the Miles Undergraduate Research and Internships (MURI) program to design and carry out his own research project this summer.

Jessica Milford was a lead organizer for the 15th annual Take Back the Night march in Pocatello on May 2.
Social Work is all about contribution. As I reflect on the 2013-2014 academic year, I am filled with amazement at the contribution that students and field instructors have made to advance the social work field. The ISU Social Work program graduated 31 students this year. Through junior and senior practicum hours, these 31 students have contributed at least 14,632 hours in social service agencies throughout southeastern Idaho. These students have not just put in hours; they have made a difference in the lives of children, families, the elderly, the incarcerated, the sick, the hurting, and the confused. Students have also contributed valuable research in program evaluation and literature reviews to determine best-practice interventions. Through it all, students have gained appreciation of the field in which they are entering. This appreciation is based on contributions from field agencies and field instructors. In our final senior seminar, graduating students described a social worker as “perceptive, educated, encouraging, objective, resourceful, compassionate, confident, a life saver, patient, always learning, empowering, caring, busy, an advocate, holistic, and available.” Field instructors have described our students as “well-prepared, valuable to the agency, helpful to clients, critical thinkers and problem-solvers, and responsive. “These descriptions highlight the contributions made to advance a better life for the people of our community! Thank you to a group of wonderful students, field instructors, and partner agencies!
Criminal Justice Program Update
by Dr. Teresa Casey

Over the past year, the ISU Criminal Justice program has made some important changes. We have formalized our internship program and expanded our community connections in order to help students obtain internship positions in policing, corrections, and the courts.

We have also updated our curriculum so that students can efficiently acquire their AA degree in Criminal Justice before completing a BA in Sociology. The AA degree will no longer require any courses that do not also apply to the BA.

We have also applied for a formal “Area of Emphasis” in Criminal Justice (for the BA degree), which will replace the current certificate in Criminal Justice. This change would allow the Area of Emphasis to be listed on student transcripts. The Criminal Justice program is thriving; we currently have 30 students who are in the AA program and 37 who are working towards a BA degree in Sociology with an emphasis in Criminal Justice.

SSWA/Sociology Club News
by Dr. Candace Christensen

The Student Social Work Association and the Sociology Student Association have joined forces over this past academic year. The combined club will now be known as the Student Social Work and Sociology Association (SSWSA) with the motto “Students Advocating for Social Empowerment.” The club has painted and decorated a new room in the department where students can relax and study. Office elections were held at the beginning of April, and the new officers are as follows:

- President – Laura Whaley
- Vice President – Randy Parker
- Treasurer – Katie Avichouser
- Secretary – Bryon Rich

The coming year will, once again, be successful for the club. SSWSA will plan and host homecoming activities and enter a float in the parade. The club will continue to send students to Advocacy Days in Boise and participate in community service projects.

SSWSA is also planning a screening of “American Winter,” a film that focuses on the lives of four families that fall into poverty during the 2008 economic depression. The coming academic year will be busy and productive for SSWSA!
Thank you and Best of Luck, Dr. Christensen!

Dr. Candace Christensen, Assistant Professor of Social Work, has accepted a new faculty position at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Dr. Christensen has been an outstanding teacher, researcher, and advisor during her time at ISU. She has been extremely active on campus and in the southeast Idaho community, and she and her partner, Jesse, will be missed tremendously. We appreciate her excellent work at ISU and wish her continued success at her new institution.

The Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice is a part of the College of Arts and Letters.

The four programs in the Department are interconnected. The Department contributes to the mission of the College of Arts and Letters by encouraging collaboration with other departments and programs within the College. The Department concentrates on research, theory, and service in regard to the community. The community plays a pivotal role in the life of individuals and it serves as a platform from which to study health and illness, diversity and social hierarchies, and criminal justice. The focus on community issues enables us to showcase the usefulness of sociology at the graduate and undergraduate levels; to create a niche for social work, particularly in the areas of child welfare, gerontology, and sexual diversity; and to find a pivotal role for criminal justice by emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community.

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The Department of Sociology, Social Work, & Criminal Justice
921 South 8th Ave., Stop 8114
Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8114
Phone: 208-282-2170
Fax: 208-282-4733
E-mail: socwork@isu.edu
Department Contact - Debbie Francis
Social Work Contact - Kevin Owens

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Idaho State University
Dept. of Sociology, Social Work, & Criminal Justice

Thank you and Best of Luck, Dr. Christensen!