

Sociology & Criminal Justice Department Newsletter

Old Dominion University

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Chair's Letter, Brian K. Payne, Ph.D.

Many exciting things have been going on in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice over the last several months. We are proud to announce the hiring of two new faculty. Dr. Allison Chappell joins us from the University of Florida and Dr. R. Alan Thompson comes to us from the University of Southern Mississippi. In addition to teaching policing and criminal justice courses, Dr. Chappell is the director of our internship program. Dr. Thompson will also teach policing and has already begun to make a mark on our graduate program. Welcome to our new faculty!

Our more seasoned faculty have continued to represent the department quite well. Dr. Xiushi Yang was promoted to full professor. Dr. Victoria Time won the College of Arts and Letters Stern Award for Excellence in Teaching and Dr. Ruth Triplett was recognized as a University Professor, an appointment that remains in place for her entire career at Old Dominion University. Congratulations to each of them for these prestigious honors.

In terms of research, our faculty continue to be leaders in their respective areas. Dr. Elizabeth Monk-Turner continues to publish several research studies each year. She published at least eight in the past academic year alone. In addition to serving as a principal investigator for a study on youth violence prevention, Dr. Randy Gainey co-authored a book this past year and also had several articles published in top journals in the field. Dr. Dianne Carmody is leading a funded project focusing on the role of social services professionals in family violence cases. Collectively, our faculty published more than thirty articles in scholarly journals this past year.

Our faculty also continue to be leaders in the classroom and for student groups. Drs. Karen Polonko and Lou Lombardo have worked with In Support of Children to host numerous departmental activities. Dr. Katarina Wegar is the faculty advisor for the Sociology Honor Society and Dr. Time serves as advisor for Alpha Phi Sigma, the Criminal Justice Honor Society. Dr. Melvina Sumter and the local chapter of the National Association for Blacks in Criminal Justice remain a pivotal part of the department, sponsoring different events for majors and minors (watch for career day in January). Dr. Mona Danner has stepped in as Graduate Program Director for the year. Dr. Garland White and Dr. Monk-Turner are preparing their classes for the department research day to be held in December. Working individually with students, Dr. Donald Smith has directed numerous student activities helping students to complete their coursework. As well, Dr. Ingrid Whitaker is serving as our curriculum representative and Dr. Araceli Suzara continues as the director of the Filipino American Center. Finally, Dr. Lee Bouvier comes to work even when he doesn't have to.

This brief description only begins to describe the many fine activities of our faculty. Many of these past, current, and future activities are described in more detail in this newsletter. Please mark your schedule and make it a point to be involved in the many activities that are scheduled in the days to come.

Sociology & Criminal Justice 3rd Annual Career Fair

The Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice in conjunction with the student chapter of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice will hold its 3rd Annual Sociology and Criminal Justice Career Fair on **Wednesday, January 25th from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the North Mall area of the Webb Center.** The career fair will provide students the opportunity to gain exposure and market themselves to prospective employers as well as learn about various career and internship opportunities in the areas of sociology and criminal justice.

Participating agencies include various human service and criminal justice agencies, such as the Community Meditation Center, Alexandria Police Department, Help and Emergency Response, Inc., Norfolk Police Department, Norfolk Victim/Witness Assistance Program, Internal Revenue Service, Newport News Police Department, Hope House Foundation, United States Marshal Service, Prince County Public Safety Recruitment, United States Secret Service, Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association, Merrimac Center, Seton Youth Shelters, Mediation Center of Hampton Roads, Chesterfield Fire and EMS, Drug Enforcement Administration, Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission, Ocean City Police Department, United States Marine Corps, United States Federal Probation, United States Drug Enforcement Administration, Portsmouth Police Department, Virginia Beach Sheriff Office, Navy Officer Programs, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Fairfax County Police Department, Chesterfield Police Department, Virginia Department of Corrections, and Virginia State Police.

CAREER FAIR HIGHLIGHTS

Alexandria Police Department: The Alexandria Police Department is currently recruiting Police Officer Candidates to start the training academy in August 2006. In addition to an excellent benefits package, upon successful completion of the training academy, the starting salary for the Police Officer 1 position is \$37,841 (PS Grade 7) and Virginia DCJS Certified Officers are eligible to start at a higher salary. Examinations for 25 applicants will be provided at the career fair and will be held in the Williamsburg Room from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. You may apply online at www.alexandria.gov and reserve an examination slot at the career fair by contacting Officer Judy Taylor at Judy.Taylor@AlexandriaVa.Gov.

MORE CAREER FAIR HIGHLIGHTS

Career Fair Directory: Available for \$3.00 at the Career Fair Registration Booth, the Career Fair Directory provides a complete listing of contact information for participating agencies at the career fair as well as information about resume development, interviewing tips, and materials

Departmental Ware: You can place an order for a departmental t- or sweatshirt which has the wording, "Sociology," "Criminal Justice," or "Sociology and Criminal Justice," at the registration booth. The t and sweatshirts come in gray or Carolina blue and range in size from adult small to triple X. The t-shirts are \$12.00 and the sweatshirts are \$36.00. There is an additional fee for double and triple X t-and/or sweatshirts. For additional information email Jason Hennings at jhenn003@odu.edu.

CAREER FAIR PREPARATION TIPS

Dress Professionally: Your professional appearance will help you make a great first impression. Many recruiters conduct initial interviews as well as hire at the event.

Have Copies of Your Resume Available: Have a supply of resumes available to give to each recruiter with whom you speak. Make sure your resume is free of typos and grammatical errors. For pointers on resume development, schedule an appointment with a staff member in the Career Management Center, located on the second floor in the North Mall area of the Webb Center.

Talk to Every Agency: Even if it is an agency you are not familiar with, talk to the recruiter, there might be positions and/or internship opportunities within your area of interest. As well, research the agencies you are interested in and impress them with your knowledge about the agency. Finally, bring a writing pad or folder with you to take notes as you speak with specific recruiters. Doing so, will provide you with vital information to write a follow up letter or email.

Conduct Yourself as You Would for an Interview: You are being rated in those few seconds or minutes on how you present yourself and often, the first impression is the only impression the agency will have of you. As such, be professional, make eye contact, introduce yourself, ask questions, have a firm handshake, smile, don't chew gum, and dress professionally.

Follow Up: Purchase a career fair directory (\$3.00) at the career fair or obtain a business card from each recruiter you speak with. Write or email thank you notes within one week, preferably one business day, which serves as a reminder to the recruiter of your qualifications and interest in the agency.

ODU Students Travel to London with Dr. Time

This past May, I took part in the opportunity of a lifetime. I traveled to London, England with Dr. Victoria Time, Mr. Steve Johnson, and twelve of my fellow Criminal Justice peers, all of whom I would now call my friends. In retrospect, this study abroad experience is loaded with experiences that cannot be experienced outside of an academic setting. The very day that we landed at Heathrow Airport, we took a coach tour of London and drove past Scotland Yard, Big Ben, and other world-renowned tourist attractions. We were granted the opportunity of sitting in on a case in England's most prestigious crown courts, Old Bailey. We all took part in the Jack the Ripper Tour in which an individual in the group constantly professed her belief that our tour guide knew the identity of Jack the Ripper. Dr. Time adamantly responded to this individual's concerns by stating, our guide has no idea who Jack the Ripper was and that no one knows the identity of the world's most notorious serial killer. We took a trip to Colchester, England to be present for a lecture by two very generous lay magistrates we sat in on more trials. There was one trial that we heard which concerned a woman who was out partying, got out of control, punched one officer, kicked another, and bit a third. This woman was sentenced to 28 days in prison, of which she only had to serve 14 days incarcerated. In the United States, this woman would have received a much more severe sentence. We traveled to the University of Essex to hear a couple of lectures on the English Justice System. We took part in so many thoroughly enjoyable educational activities that I could spend several days describing my experiences with these activities. However, I do not want everyone to think that we traveled only to submerge ourselves in foreign academics. We all also took part in London's extremely rich and diverse culture.

We dined at some of the best (and affordable) restaurants and pubs. Two favorites by most of the group were the Black Lion and the Swan. Some of the group went out to enjoy the club scene, see productions such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Blood Brothers*, and to see *Star Wars: Episode III*. We ventured to Westminster Cathedral, Tower Bridge, and the Sherlock Holmes Museum. We took boat rides, train rides, and even went up in the London Eye.

During this expedition, most of us started out as strangers and acquaintances but by the end, we developed bonds that will last a lifetime. There is so much to experience and learn about how foreign nations conduct their criminal justice systems. This is why I am trying as hard as I can to participate in the trip to London and Amsterdam this coming May. I implore every one of you who is interested, contact Dr. Time or Mr. Johnson; make some monetary sacrifices so that you can experience something that you will never have the opportunity to experience outside of this setting. I did, and I will never regret the decision I made due to the outstanding memories that I have gained.

Jason Henning

Advice from our Graduate Student Representative

I was once told that one of the best ways to know what you want to do with your life is to find out all of the information you can about things that interest you. Well, in this news letter I obviously cannot tell you everything you need or want to know about graduate school, particularly the Applied Sociology MA program at ODU, but hopefully I can provide you with some information that will encourage you to find out more about applying and attending graduate school.

Applying to Graduate School

Graduate school is nothing like undergraduate school. This reality first becomes apparent when you apply to the Applied Sociology Masters program. Gaining acceptance into this program requires more than just filling out an application. You must show the admission committee why they should pick you, opposed to other applicants. What do you have to offer to the Sociology and Criminal Justice department, and why would you be an asset to the program?

The first step in applying to graduate school is to check out the Graduate program website. This is a helpful tool in that it provides you the requirements for admission, a FAQ section and contact information for the graduate program director, chair of the department, in addition to other faculty. After exploring the website, you should direct any questions that you may have to the graduate program director.

Once you have printed off the application, you need to make sure that all of your transcripts from your undergraduate institutions have been sent to ODU. Next, begin thinking about your admission essay. Keep in mind that this is an essay that not only shows your writing ability, but more importantly, this is your time to express yourself; your aspirations, personal qualities, motivations, accomplishments and goals. This is your time to impress the graduate committee and to make them want to know more about you. You want to write an essay that will make them remember your name. An essay that convinces them that you will be an asset to the program. Additionally, make sure that you have an up to date academic resume. Again, be sure to list all of your substantial academic accomplishments that will aid the admissions committee in choosing to select you as a student in the program.

Why Should You Choose Graduate School?

You should choose graduate school if you crave knowledge. The Applied Sociology masters program at ODU provides each individual student with the nutrients necessary to fulfill the craving for knowledge. Graduate school teaches you a new way of thinking, a way much different than what you utilize as an undergraduate student. You learn not only the material presented, but more importantly, how to analyze, interpret and teach what you have learned. You learn to apply what you have read, and how to answer the “so what” question.

This program is a seminar style program. This means that classes are constructed in a manner whereby the students are the active participants, opposed to the professors. Graduate students present the weekly material to the class. Not only does this style teach individuals how to digest what they read, but it teaches students how to apply what they have read and how to help others understand the readings. Thus, the seminar style classes not only teach you how to think on a different level, but also how to speak effectively to groups of individuals. Sure, everyone is nervous the first few times you have to teach class, but over time, it really becomes fun!

Furthermore, you should choose graduate school if you love sociology, criminal justice, and/or women’s studies. Graduate school focuses on these subjects, and you spend two years learning much about these subjects. You get the opportunity to explore the subjects that you are passionate about. You learn how to do research on the subject matter that you love. Additionally, you learn how to do the statistics necessary to investigate your choice of subject in depth.

Last, among other things, you should choose graduate school if you want to have fun! The Applied Sociology program is small and you instantly make new friends to endure the next two years with. The professors are not only knowledgeable, but they are fun. The small class size (usually no more than 20 people), allows for students to receive individual attention from the professors and because of the small class size, you get an opportunity to voice your thoughts. Peek in on a graduate class and you will see lots of happy faces... graduate school is fun!

My Tips for Graduate Students

- I suggest looking at the website and asking questions that you may have about the program. This will help you to feel confident that you have made the right decision.
 - I suggest that you have the expectation that graduate school will be much different than your undergraduate experience. If you have this expectation prior to the first day of classes, it will avoid the “shock” factor when you go to your first class.
 - Attend the orientation prior to the first day of classes. This orientation is a great opportunity to meet others in the program, the faculty, and to receive a few tips from students already in the program.
 - Make friends quickly. It is very important in graduate school that you know your classmates. There will come a time when you will need them to bounce ideas off of. Having friends in your class will help to put your nerves at ease when you have to present the class material.
 - Ask questions! If you aren’t sure about something, ask! Graduate school is challenging, and can be even more challenging if you do not ask questions.
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- Never get behind in your coursework. If you get behind in your class material, it is virtually impossible for you to catch up. It will be very hard for you to be successful in this program if you fall behind.
- Be prepared to work hard, gaining much knowledge as the reward!
- HAVE FUN!!!! And buy stock in your favorite caffeinated drink, as there will be times when you will need to have the pot of coffee right next to you!
- Last, please contact the graduate student representative (a graduate student that has been chosen by the professors to represent the other graduate students), or the graduate program director if you have any questions!

I hope that this brief article has helped to answer some questions that you may have about the Applied Sociology MA program. Feel free to contact me should you have any further questions!

Kara Hoofnagle, khoof001@odu.edu
Graduate student representative

Faculty Spotlight: R. Alan Thompson, Ph.D.

As a new faculty member it is indeed exciting to contribute to this issue of the Department newsletter. To date, I have only met those students currently enrolled in either "Law and the Criminal Justice System" or "Police in American Society." Indeed, with over 800 declared majors, there are many names and faces to memorize so I really have my work cut out for me. I apologize in advance for not having a perfect memory - That happens when you get old (so just imagine how bad it must be for someone like Dr. Payne☺). If we happen to pass one another on campus (before Dr. Payne reads this and gives me the boot), please don't be shy about introducing yourself - I, like most other professors, really respect students who take the initiative to "be known."

I'd like to use this forum as an opportunity to touch on two topics: 1) My background and research interests, and; 2) What I hope to contribute to your experience as one of our majors.

Without going into the really boring details, I was born and raised in Texas and, at age 21, became a police officer (an unexpected career choice given the crowd I ran with in high school). To be perfectly honest, I never once thought about becoming a professor or even going to college for that matter (another accomplishment that would surprise my junior and high school guidance counselors). Fortunately, I began taking junior college courses and, before I knew it, had completed an Associate's degree. Just like in the movie when Forrest Gump decided to "keep on running," I too figured I might as well keep going until I had earned a Bachelor's degree. I pressed on to complete a Master's degree and, during that time, realized that the best way to make a lasting contribution to law enforcement was through teaching. This inspired me to earn a Ph.D. from Sam Houston State University. My first job as a professor was at The University of Southern Mississippi where

I taught courses at all three academic levels (undergraduate, masters and Ph.D.) for five years.

Over the years, my research interests have centered on practical aspects of police work. For example, I became a police officer in the early 1990's just as HIV / AIDS was becoming prevalent in the general population. I found myself becoming more and more "germaphobic" after handling people who were either bleeding, had spat upon me, belonged to one of the high-risk groups (IV drug users, prostitutes), or sometimes all of the above. This experience formed the basis for my research into how police officers react in situations where the risk of AIDS contagion is present. Another example of how practical police experience has guided my research arises in the context of street-level drug interdiction. In such instances, it is not uncommon for suspects to swallow the evidence in an attempt to render it irretrievable. The question that arises from this not uncommon situation is one of determining how much force the police can lawfully use to recover the evidence. My published review of the case law on this topic provides officers and agencies alike with practical guidance that ensures the admissibility of recovered evidence while at the same time minimizing the risk of civil liability.

These attributes and interests lead to a brief discussion of what I hope to contribute to your experience as one of our students. In particular, I think it is important that you be prepared for the realities of criminal justice employment. I try to accomplish this by blending practical experience with an academic understanding / explanation of why things are (or are not) as they should be. A second contribution I would like to make is to "pay forward" some of the favors that others have done for me along the way. This might include help with making job contacts, identifying internship opportunities, writing letters of recommendation, navigating the employment selection process, dispensing career advice, etc. For this reason, it is important that you "be known," have good attendance, and take coursework seriously so that I (and others in the Department) can personally vouch for your ability when, inevitably, it comes time to provide a recommendation for employment. Lastly, I hope to make your time at ODU a positive experience so that upon graduation not only will you begin a rewarding career for which you have strategically prepared, but one that allows you to spread the good word to others about criminal justice education at ODU and its potential for changing people's lives. Eventually you will serve as an ambassador of our program and University, and I for one want you to reflect positively on your time as a student so that through education we can work together to improve the quality of criminal justice in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. With all of this in mind, I hope you're still willing to introduce yourself so that we can become better acquainted. Until then, I leave you with my best regards.

R. Alan Thompson, Ph.D.