An Agro-Ecological Model of Development in Italy

Who is the long-haired blonde eating the grapes? It is none other than Dr. Alison Hall, some 38 years ago, in Ravenna, Italy doing her Ph.D. dissertation research on the world's oldest voluntary cooperative farms. The Italians called her "Aleeche" (from "Alice in Wonderland") because her name wasn't translatable. They all thought she had come to Italy to learn how to cooperate so that she could go back to California (which they thought was frozen in The Grapes of Wrath movie) to teach Americans how it is done. She felt like the first anthropologist in the history of the discipline whose "subjects" thought she came from a less civilized country.

Over the years that have passed since 1972, and especially with the current concern over the sustainability of our own agricultural practices, Dr. Hall continued to think about the experience. After discussing these issues with Dr. Lynne Rich, the two scholars resolved to go back to Italy to see what had happened in those 38 years and to analyze those changes from a combined sociological scientific perspective and a humanistic anthropological one. Thanks to a University of Central Arkansas Research Council grant, they were able to go to Italy last summer to visit the cooperatives and gather current census and other data. They found that many changes had occurred over 38 years, including a massive drop in the agricultural labor population belonging to cooperatives. The amount of land belonging to the cooperatives, which is essentially passed on from generation to generation without being held in private hands, has increased. Many small family farms have survived in the Delta of the Po River Valley, which is in stark contrast to what has happened in our own Lower Mississippi Delta with the large concentration of "factories in the fields" and confined animal feeding operations. This is because the small farmers were able to join with the large agricultural production cooperatives, and together they had a very significant economy of scale and were able to form extremely strong cooperatives for the transformation and marketing of agricultural products.

The result in Italy was the development of what can be called an "agro-ecological" as opposed to "agribusiness" model of agricultural development. Further research is needed to explore the potential policy implications for U.S. agriculture in general and Arkansas Delta agriculture in particular. Drs. Hall and Rich plan to submit a National Science Foundation research proposal to expand the scope of the project and to include UCA students in Italy and Arkansas.
Campbell Publishes

Dr. Brian Campbell, UCA Assistant Professor of Anthropology, published an article entitled “Closest to Everlastin’ : Ozark Agricultural Biodiversity and Subsistence Traditions”. The article was published September 20, 2010, in Southern Spaces, an online peer-reviewed journal about regions, places, and cultures of the American South and their global connections.

Dr. Campbell’s article may be viewed at http://southernspaces.org/2010/closest-everlastin-ozark-agricultural-biodiversity-and-subsistence-traditions.

Additionally, Dr. Campbell produced two ethnographic documentary films, Seed Swap, directed by UCA film program graduate Zachariah McCannon, and The Natural State of America, co-directed by UCA alumni Terrell Case, Corey Gattin, and Tim Wistrand. Both films were showcased at American University’s 7th Annual Public Anthropology Conference Film Festival on October 17, 2010.

Beacham Publishes

Mr. Cliff Beacham, UCA Lecturer of Sociology, has an article, “Memory Brokers, Shameful Pasts, and Civil War Commemoration” forthcoming in the Journal of Black Studies. The article is co-written with Dr. Lori Holyfield, University of Arkansas Associate Professor of Sociology.

The authors examine the commemoration of the American Civil War via the symbolic structure of “fragmented” and “multivocal” commemorative sites. Through observation, thick description, and interviews, this work examines the contested commemoration of the American Civil War with regard to race, slavery, and collective sentiment. The role of memory brokers in the commemoration process, both past and present, is identified, placing the commemoration of the American Civil War within a shame-centered framework.

Wilson Chosen as Faculty Senate VP

Dr. Janet Wilson, UCA Associate Professor of Sociology, was elected as the Vice President of the UCA Faculty Senate for the 2010-2011 academic year. This position oversees the staffing of 50+ university committees. From May 2011 until May 2012, she will serve as President of the Faculty Senate representing the needs of all faculty members on campus, meeting regularly with the Provost, speaking at graduations and to the Board of Trustees; she will also serve as the Chair of the Budget Advisory Committee. For the final portion of her term, May 2012 to May 2013, she will serve as Past President of the Faculty Senate and as Chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee.

Akhter Named Editor

Dr. Rifat Akhter, UCA Assistant Professor of Sociology, will serve as the 2010-2011 associate editor for The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. The journal aims to examine the nature of disciplinary practices, and the interdisciplinary practices that arise in the context of ‘real world’ applications. It also interrogates what constitutes ‘science’ in a social context, and the connections between the social and other sciences.

Additionally, she participated in a Policy Dialogue on “Efforts for Attaining The Zero Population Growth” during her recent visit to Bangladesh. This policy dialogue series was organized by Planning Commission Bangladesh and The United Nations Population Funds on December 20, 2010. Policy planners, researchers, and professors who are specialized on population issues participated in the dialogue series.

If you are considering Sociology for a major please set up an appointment to speak with Mr. Beacham. cliffb@uca.edu
Drs. Shepherd Appear on Radio

Dr. Gordon Shepherd (right), UCA Professor of Sociology, appeared on Milt Rosenberg’s WGN radio program, Extension 720, on July 28, 2010. Dr. Shepherd and his brother, Dr. Gary Shepherd (left), discussed their new book Talking with the Children of God: Prophecy and Transformation in a Radical Religious Group. The co-authors discussed the book for the first hour and then answered an hour of call-in listeners’ questions.

UCA Hosts ASAA 40th Annual Meeting

The UCA Sociology Department hosted the 40th Annual Meeting of the Arkansas Sociological and Anthropological Association (ASAA) in the Student Center on November 12, 2010. More than fifty faculty and students from across the state attended the conference, themed “Organic Communities: Solidarity and Sustainability in a Globalized World.”

Members and students presented research covering deviance, gender and globalization, community and collectivism, self and society, and community-based folklife practice and Ozark sustainability. Dr. Allison Vetter, Henderson State University, President ASAA, presented to Dr. Gordon Shepherd, UCA Professor of Sociology, the ASAA President’s Award for his outstanding research and contribution to the discipline.
Cleveland Applies Internship Experience

My name is Shannon Cleveland and I am a May 2009 Sociology graduate from the University of Central Arkansas. During my senior year in college I received one of two competitive scholarships to attend The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars in Washington DC. I interned for the Amputee Coalition of America where they advocated for individuals with amputees to be able to receive prosthetic devices through their private insurances that would be on par with Medicare. I felt that this internship suited me well because as someone with a disability in need of medical services I understand some of the struggles with both public and private insurances. At this internship I participated in lobbying on Capitol Hill, I reached out to grassroots supporters to generate coverage on campaign issues, and I also identified media contacts to enhance a comprehensive media database. My overall experience at this internship made me feel more prepared for entering the workforce. It did this by giving me the confidence I needed through being successful at the tasks I was given.

I am currently working for a nonprofit organization known as Project Arkansas Work Incentives Network or Project AWIN. I am a Community Work Incentive Coordinator and I counsel individuals with disabilities who are receiving SSI and or SSDI benefits on Social Security work incentives. It is our goal to encourage people with disabilities to enter the workforce by informing them of these work incentives. Once an individual understands that they can both work and keep some of their vital benefits such as health insurance they are more likely to become employed. As someone who was formerly on SSI benefits I enjoy being an example and demonstrating that, yes you too can work. I am grateful to have the job that I do. I believe that my participation in The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars helped to make me a prime candidate for the position I currently have. My boss has told me in the past that he knew he was going to hire me after seeing my resume and the internship I had in Washington DC.
Sociology Club Members Keep Their Hands Dirty

Students from the Sociology Club gathered at the home of Mr. Beacham in November and built the first of a grouping of garden boxes for the local women’s shelter. The gardens will allow shelter residents to grow their own fresh food which, in turn, will reduce the shelter food budget. The club hopes to empower the residents through horticulture therapy by providing the residents a place to relax and the opportunity to learn gardening skills. The gardens will also beautify the property and improve drainage.

So You Wanna Go to Grad School?

The Sociology Club presented *So You Wanna Go to Grad School?* on the evening of October 14. Approximately 30 students attended the panel discussion where they learned about the graduate school application process. Panel members were, Dr. Elaine McNiece, Dean, UCA Graduate School; Dr. Bill Lammers, UCA Psychology Graduate Program; Dr. Wendy Castro, UCA History Graduate Program; and, Lacey Tyson, UCA Alum, now attending University of Arkansas Sociology Graduate School.

Hands-On Learning with an EDGE

Dr. Brian Campbell’s Sustainability Studies class, offered during May 2010 Intersession, was action packed. The class was partially funded by the University of Central Arkansas College of Liberal Arts’ EDucating for Global Engagement (EDGE) initiative which promotes experiential learning activities outside the classroom that encourage global engagement. The Sustainability Studies class offered anthropological, cultural, professional, and community experience which strengthened the students’ critical thinking skills and informed them about how consumption choices impact the world in both positive and negative ways.

The 12 students were introduced to concepts of bioregionalism including alternative energy and biofuels, sustainable architecture, greenhouse management, organic gardening and farming, Arkansas medicinal plants, and local foods. Classroom lectures were enhanced by three multi-location, hands-on field trips. Locations visited included Tilly Permaculture Farm in Tilly, Arkansas; Alford Forest, Ozark Seed Bank, and Elixir Farms, all in south central Missouri, Petit Jean Agricultural Cooperative in Perryville, Arkansas, and Bean Mountain Farms in Newton County, Arkansas. Students also enjoyed an archaeological/ethnobiological camping trip with hiking and canoe tours of the Buffalo River watershed in Newton County.
Ross Working For Social Change

Karen Ross, May 2010 UCA graduate, is applying her sociology degree in a big way! Many of you may recognize Karen; while attending UCA, she was a member of Alpha Kappa Delta, the sociology honor society, and she was a familiar face around the department.

Throughout college, I changed my major at least 5 times. Even after I finally decided on double majoring in sociology and International Studies, I still didn’t have much of an idea of what I wanted to do with my life or my chosen fields. All I knew was that I was passionate about people and helping them. I had worked with local nonprofits/NGOs and loved it, so when the opportunity came my junior year to do an internship in Cape Town, I jumped at the chance to spend 3 months at a refugee center in Africa. In the mornings I did a variety of things such as working the employment help desk, running the soup kitchen, managing computer classes, teaching English classes, or helping with the clothing drive. In the afternoons, I took a bus across town to a children’s home where I tutored and just hung out with young refugees. I spent my summer immersed in South African society and issues and had the opportunity to apply sociological theories and concepts to nearly everything around me – refugee socialization and assimilation, cultural relativism, xenophobia, apartheid, class conflict. I came back from my internship with not only renewed knowledge and experiences, but also a greater thirst for social betterment. A year after my sociology internship, I graduated from UCA and moved to San Diego, California to work for SCHAP, a non-profit organization that works to help empower communities across the world. My internship and education in sociology landed me an amazing position where I’m active in social and global change. With SCHAP I have lived in rural Africa while working on community development projects. This past summer I co-directed the Youth Development program in Matoso, Kenya and am currently developing a similar program for a project in Uganda that I will help launch in 2011. I am also planning to research potential project development sites in the Philippines, where I will start recon work in 2011. I majored in Sociology because I wanted to study society and the world; the tools I took from my education in sociology led to my strong interest in social change, which then ignited me to take action towards social betterment.
UCA West Mexican Shaft Tomb Project*

From 1978 to 2010, UCA received gifts from two donors of approximately 600 ceramic figurines and utilitarian bowls and jars from various cultures within the Shaft Tomb Tradition in West Mexico dating from 500 B.C. to 1500 A.D. The Native American people who made these artifacts to accompany the dead in their journey to the afterlife buried their loved ones in deep shafts underneath their village ceremonial centers. Their cultures pre-dated and were contemporaneous with the better known Pre-Columbian (before the Hispanic invasion) Aztec and Mayan civilizations of Mexico. Their means of subsistence and social organization provide clues to the reasons for development of cultures from peaceful egalitarian foragers to militaristic agricultural villages where individual statuses were ranked in hierarchical, stratified systems. Such cultures are similar to those who occupied the highly populated villages along the Mississippi River in Arkansas, including the settlements at Parkin and even the misnamed Toltec Mounds. Techniques of agriculture practiced in the American Southwest by the Pueblo Indians may very well have originated with the cultures of the West Mexican Shaft Tomb Tradition. Another tantalizing possibility in the light of worldwide enthusiasm for football, basketball, baseball, soccer and other team sports is that the oldest known team sports in the world may also have originated there.

They learned that their knowledge of computers is a marketable skill. They assumed responsibility for developing original ideas for what will ultimately become exhibition planning and implementation proposals to the Arkansas Humanities Council. Plans are to exhibit a portion of the collection for permanent exhibition somewhere on campus and develop interpretive programs for school children visitors which will include hands-on activities and treasure hunts.

History major and anthropology minor Julie McVey has chosen the project for her Honors Thesis research. Art History major and anthropology minor Katherine Hall has worked on the collection in the Baum Gallery and on an Independent Study project. Next semester, she will do an internship of collections work with Art History student Chris O’Quinn. They have figured out a way to use an iPad to make identifying each object not such a daunting task. As with the popular C.S.I. television series, new technologies are immensely valuable not only in providing new insights, but also in the cataloguing, maintaining, and making collections like the ones owned by UCA of pottery accessible to scholars. The detrimental effect on the scientific study of the past due to the illicit sale of antiquities and faked replicas should not be underestimated. The third largest type of black-market trafficking, behind drugs and weapons, is, in fact, the sale of antiquities.

*See UCA West Mexican Shaft Tomb Project on Facebook

Allen Earns Outstanding Internship Award

Alicia Allen was awarded the department’s first Outstanding Sociology Internship Award on December 10. Allen was chosen based on both her volunteer work and internship with the Conserving Arkansas’s Agricultural Heritage (CAAH!) project under the direction of Dr. Brian Campbell. Allen oversaw the cultivation, planting, and harvesting of several garden beds; managed, harvested and dried heirloom seeds; supervised garden and Seed Swap volunteers, and prepared for and attended seven Seed Swaps across the state. Her final submission was a CAAH! instruction manual, a collaborative effort with another intern. Dr. Brian Campbell says Allen “has been an invaluable component of the growing success of this project and stands out in her dedication, hard work, and intellectual understanding of the cultural and biological aspects of agricultural conservation research and service.”

Allen currently lives in Conway with her dog, Bella, and two roommates. She is very involved in the Urban Community Garden Project behind the Faulkner County Library. She plans to stay in Conway until May when she will most likely move to Little Rock where she coaches gymnastics at Increased Heights Gymnastics. Allen said she hopes to get a job with a homeless shelter in the near future so she can apply her knowledge and experience to things that she is passionate about: “I do not really know where my life will go, but I know where ever it takes me I hope to be the change that I wish to see in this world.”
Matt F. Simpson accepted the Katherine Hinson Outstanding Sociology Student Award, Fall 2010, on December 10. He graduated summa cum laude from UCA on December 18 with a Bachelor of Science in sociology with an anthropology minor. Matt returned to school after a 15-year hiatus with the intention of obtaining a Masters of Library Science. He chose sociology for his undergraduate degree because it always fascinated him; he believes he made the correct choice.

Matt and his wife of 3 years, Carrie, recently moved to a new home in West Little Rock with their dachshund, Quincy, and cat, Bodhi. Matt begins graduate school through the University of North Texas in January and will study online for a Masters of Library & Information Science. He has applied for a position in Torreyson Library and hopes to work there full time while obtaining his Masters. After completion of the MLIS program Matt hopes to find a position as a reference librarian at a nearby university. He said, “In a perfect world that library would be Torreyson at UCA!”

Simpson Named Outstanding Student Fall 2010

The degree of Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, with a major in sociology, requires the completion of 124 hours, including the general education component, degree requirements, major requirements listed below, a minor worked out with a minor advisor, 40 upper division hours, and a minimum 2.0 GPA overall, in the major, and in the minor. Students may declare a major in sociology after they have completed SOC 1300 with a grade of C or better.