Criminology, Justice, and Administration

The University of Central Arkansas Department of Sociology and the Department of Political Science brainstormed to create the Criminology, Justice, and Administration plan of study (CJA). This plan of study combines the strengths of two liberal arts disciplines to meet the needs of motivated students interested in criminal justice and related fields.

Students pursuing this complementary pairing of a major in the Sociology Department with a criminology concentration and a minor in public administration offered by the Department of Political Science will develop a strong set of skills and abilities for future careers in criminal justice fields or further study in a graduate school or professional program.

Traditional criminal justice programs tend to focus narrowly on applied aspects of law enforcement, courts, and corrections. While this approach is beneficial, it can meet only part of the objectives of higher education in preparing a student for a successful life and career in a fast-changing economy. The CJA plan takes a more holistic outlook. Students will learn, for example, about: the social causes of crime and victims’ rights (Criminology); racial and gender inequalities and administrative law (Justice); and public policy and intergovernmental relations (Administration). Students also have the opportunity to complete a structured internship.

This liberal arts approach offers students broad exposure to several academic departments and perspectives in addition to a discipline-specific focus in the major and minor. Upon graduation students should possess both a solid base of general knowledge and abilities along with an in-depth understanding of particular topics and skills. Interested students can find information on the department’s web page (www.uca.edu/sociology/).

Intern Award Named for Former Chair

The sociology faculty created The Dr. Carl Redden Outstanding Sociology Intern Award to recognize sociology students who perform exceptionally well during their internships. Dr. Carl Redden served as Chair of the Department of Sociology from 1971 until 1994, retiring in 1997. He passed away on March 15, 2011 after an extended illness. He was known for his professionalism, his volunteerism, and his high expectations for excellence. Dr. Gordon Shepherd who worked with Dr. Redden says, “What I remember most about Dr. Redden is that he treated us all with civility and respect and that he was genuinely committed to the professional welfare of his faculty and the educational development of our students.”

Dr. Redden, a native of Jonesboro, earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from Oklahoma State University, his master’s degree from the University of Arkansas, and his bachelor’s degree from Arkansas State University. He was an active member of The Gideons International for 34 years. He also was a member of the Conway Noon Rotary Club, which named him a Paul Harris Fellow in recognition of his character and service to the organization.

Dr. Redden was a positive influence on his students during his tenure at UCA. The award bearing his name hangs in the sociology office as a reminder to students to work diligently and to strive for excellence.

Mr. Jonathan Redden and Mrs. Melda Redden, son and wife of Dr. Carl Redden, were present for the naming of the award.
Dr. Rifat Akhter, UCA Assistant Professor of Sociology, has two articles accepted for publication. “Impacts of Foreign Investment and Sex Ratio on Women’s Status” is forthcoming in The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. “Attitudes towards Physical Abuse Among Women and Men of Bangladesh: An Empirical Investigation of Demographic Health Survey Data 2007” is forthcoming in the Journal of US-China Public Administration.

Dr. Douglas George received tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor of Sociology. Dr. George joined the UCA faculty in August of 2005. A native of Colby, KS, he completed his Ph.D. at the University of North Texas, his M.S. at the University of Central Arkansas, and his B.S. at Kansas State University. His specialty fields include race and ethnicity, sociology of sport, and sociology of work.

The department and students extend our congratulations!

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Mr. Cliff Beacham, UCA Instructor I of Sociology, and Emileigh Selman, senior Honors College scholar, received a $3,000 grant from the UCA Foundation to support the Faulkner County Urban Farming Project. The project created and maintains a garden that allows students and community members to demonstrate sustainable collective home food production. Workers share produce and give any extra vegetables to local food banks. The project, located behind the Faulkner County Library in Conway, includes a 3500 square foot garden bed, strawberry beds, fruit trees, a greenhouse, and a compost system. Both UCA and Hendrix students participate in the project.

Dr. Brian Campbell, UCA Assistant Professor of Anthropology, will serve a three-year term as a commissioner on the Ozark Folk Cultural Center Commission. The commission is a liaison between the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Department and the city of Mountain View which owns the Ozark Folk Center. Dr. Campbell was nominated because of his expertise on the Ozarks and agricultural biodiversity.

Additionally, Dr. Campbell received a $5,000 Arkansas Humanities Council grant for the production of a documentary film about the recent mass death of birds and fish in Arkansas.

“The Natural State of America” premiered in the Made in Arkansas program at the 5th Annual Little Rock Film Festival, June 1-5. The documentary was written and produced by Dr. Brian Campbell, UCA Assistant Professor of Anthropology, and co-directed by three UCA Digital Film Program alums, Terrell Case, Corey Gattin, and Timothy Wistrand. The film previously won the Society for Applied Anthropology’s 2011 Annual Film Competition. “The Natural State of America” highlights a four decade effort to prevent herbicide use in the Arkansas Ozark National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service has sprayed herbicides in the Ozark National Forest for years for their vegetative management. Recently, a rural electric cooperative that covers much of the Ozarks has started spraying to maintain their power line right-of-ways.
Shepherd Recognized for Excellence

Dr. Gordon Shepherd, Professor of Sociology, received UCA’s Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Award on April 19, 2011. This award “recognizes individuals whose contributions to their disciplines have been exemplary. Through original work in research, scholarship or creative activities (such as performances and artistic productions), they have expanded human knowledge, interpreted the human experience, or enhanced the quality of our lives.”

Dr. John Toth, Chair of the UCA Department of Sociology, states, “Dr. Shepherd’s impressive record of research and scholarship makes him a worthy recipient of this honor. In particular, his work on the Family International, a radical religious sect, exemplifies his commitment to the research enterprise. Although other scholars have studied this group, Dr. Shepherd has had unprecedented access to their social world because of the rapport and trust he has developed by studying various members for more than 10 years. In my mind, this kind of deep, long-term research is a model for quality social science research, and promises to make significant contributions to the discipline.”

Dr. Shepherd, a native of Salt Lake City, Utah, joined the UCA Department of Sociology in 1980. He completed both his M.A. and Ph.D. at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and his B.A. at the University of Utah. His research interests include new religious movements, religious institutions, and political and social values in higher education. He is the co-author of three books: Talking with the Children of God, Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle, and A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism. Additionally, he is the author of numerous scholarly articles, and is currently working on another book. However, he still finds plenty of time to help students with statistics, theory, and advising.

Gender Studies Minor Lecture Series

The Gender Studies minor program hosts one lecture a semester to provide an opportunity for students to learn about gender issues through faculty research. The topics are often those not covered in the classroom, but are presentations that enhance textbook material, and in turn, emphasize the significance of gender in society. The lectures are an example of the high-quality research that faculty are contributing to the academic world. Moreover, the lectures aim to inspire students to do research.

Dr. Rifat Akhter, director of the Gender Studies minor program, wants students to know that no matter what their majors are they can integrate this minor into their career goals. “One day they will apply their knowledge in the real world and gender issues are all around us. The interdisciplinary nature of the program is beneficial in numerous ways: It touches on different issues, theories, and ideas across various subject areas, giving students well-rounded perspectives. Students learn to think critically and are inspired to affect positive changes regarding justice and equality.”

More information about the program may be found at www.uca.edu/genderstudies or send questions to rifata@uca.edu.

Working with Victims and Offenders

Dr. Wilson’s Victimology class participated in a panel discussion composed of professionals who deal directly with victims and offenders. The panel, held April 7th, examined how victims are treated throughout the criminal justice system. The participants discussed the procedures for dealing with both victims and offenders and various services available to crime victims in Conway and the surrounding area.

Serving on the panel were MeKisha Childers and Brenna Willis of the Department of Community Corrections; Autumn Davis of the Children’s Advocacy Alliance; Deb Kennemer of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates); Jenny Morse of Haven (a residential shelter for abused girls); and Faye Shepherd, Community Resource Coordinator for the Volunteer Probation Officer program (VPO) of the Faulkner County juvenile court system.
UCA Students Present at Symposium

Eight University of Central Arkansas sociology students presented research at the 32nd annual Arkansas Sociology and Anthropology Undergraduate Symposium. The event, hosted by the Department of Sociology/Anthropology of Hendrix College in Conway, was held April 22, 2011, in the Mills Center on the Hendrix campus.

Students presenting research:

Tanya Petrovic, “Advertising in the Media: Targeting Gender and Race”

Alyx VanNess, “June Cleaver as the Twenty-First Century Woman: The Perceived Female in Modern Home and Lifestyle Magazines”

Brittany Zielstra, “Rap Music and Videos: How Women are Portrayed in the Popularized Genre of Rap”

Kyle Moix, “Still Pullin’ on those Bootstraps: American Attitudes Toward Poverty”

Hillary Williams, “Woman in a Fighter’s Body: Gender Identity and Negotiation in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu”

Kristen Sobba, “Age in relation to Abortion views: A Comparative Analysis on GSS and UCA Data”


Kathy Hill, “UCA Sociology Club: Horticulture Project at the Women’s Shelter of Central Arkansas”
Department Graduates Applying Their Skills

Julie McVey, 2011 anthropology minor graduate, is working as the Assistant Registrar at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center in Little Rock. She is applying the museum collection cataloging skills that she learned in Dr. Alison Hall’s Museum Anthropology class. Julie said with a big grin, “I am thankful for the skill set that I obtained from my degree. It’s great to be a debt-free graduate with an interesting job.” Julie plans to attend graduate school in the future.

Michaela Curran Strange, graduate and 2004 Katherine Hinson Outstanding Sociology Student Award winner, recently received a three-year teaching and research fellowship to pursue a master’s in sociology in the Department of Sociology at the University of California—Riverside. She begins her position this fall, 2011.

In a letter to the UCA Sociology Department, Don said he was motivated by the department’s kindness, patience, and brilliance and he looks forward to continuing his studies on the topics that he was introduced to while an undergrad at UCA.

Michaela describes how she has applied her degree while in the workforce, “I have worked for three corporations. All along I have viewed my experiences through the unique lens sociology gifted me. When I was provided a choice in direction for a career, I asked to be assigned to collect and aggregate group data. I wonder about the structure of large organizations and how well these structures support worker morale and power relationships. I often think about how technology changes and continues to shape the American workforce. I can see that underneath the hood of a corporation lies a complex series of social networks, power struggles, and organizational shifts in a marketplace of competing ideas and social/economic interests.”

Don Willis, graduate and Spring 2010 Katherine Hinson Outstanding Sociology Student Award winner, received a research assistantship with the Community and Family Institute located in the University of Arkansas Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. Most recently, the institute completed a survey of the homeless population in North West Arkansas. Don hopes to be a part of similar projects. He begins his position this fall, 2011.

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Sociology Club Completes Successful Year

This year, the Sociology Club was very active once again. With up to twenty-five members participating, they designed a new t-shirt, built a raised-bed garden for the Faulkner County Women’s Shelter, hosted a graduate school preparation panel, and conducted the Survey on Norms and Values for the third semester (they have surveyed over one thousand UCA students). In addition, several members volunteered at the Urban Farming Project. Numerous fundraisers helped provide resources for these activities and allowed them to donate one hundred dollars to the Save Japan Fund.
Any UCA students who are interested in social issues may join the Sociology Club. Email Mr. Beacham at cliffb@uca.edu

Students, faculty, and guests enjoyed food, fun, and fellowship at the department’s end-of-the-year potluck and awards celebration.

Dr. Toth awarded the Dr. Carl Redden Outstanding Sociology Intern Award to Tisha Nooner (Spring 2011) and Alicia Allen (Fall 2010) at the College of Liberal Arts Honors Convocation in May.

Kristen Sobba (far right) and her family celebrate her being recognized as the 2011 Katherine Hinson Outstanding Sociology Student Award recipient.

Tisha Nooner and Daniel Chien model the Sociology Club t-shirts.

Dr. Shepherd and Dr. Rich at the College of Liberal Arts End-of-Year Celebration
Tisha Nooner, senior UCA Sociology major, received The Dr. Carl Redden Outstanding Sociology Intern Award for Spring 2011. Ms. Nooner was selected for her responsibility and excellent work while performing her duties in the Faulkner County Volunteer Probation Officer program.

She shares her experience:

“My internship experience through the Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO) Program was extremely educational and gave me plenty of hands-on experience with the juvenile justice system. There are many different aspects of the program that are interesting. One of those aspects is the Drug Court Program, which I worked with directly. The Drug Court Program is a specialized rehabilitation system within the Juvenile Court system. Drug court has many goals but one of the main objectives is to decrease the incidence of drug use among juvenile offenders and their families by providing them with educational systems, community resources, and services to assist them in developing the skills to make crime-free and drug-free life choices.

“The work of a Drug Court VPO consists of a number of different tasks. Throughout the semester I conducted drug screens, breathalyzer tests, random curfew checks, home inspections, and attended Drug Court meetings and sessions on a monthly basis. The VPO is required to develop a working relationship with their juveniles and help them progress through the program. The Drug Court VPO serves as the eyes and ears for the Juvenile Court system. The experience working with the juveniles and Drug Court is truly eye opening. As a sociology major with a criminology concentration it allows you to actually apply many of the different things you’ve learned in class to the situations you encounter.

“After my internship had concluded I was offered a part time job with Juvenile Services and have been able to continue working with the Drug Court Program in a more in depth manner. I will graduate in the fall and am hoping to find a job working as a juvenile probation officer. I have also looked into applying for federal probation officer positions within the state, although I believe that working with juvenile offenders is really what I would love to do. The internship was extremely rewarding and I feel like I have benefited in more ways than I ever expected. Everyone at Juvenile Services was more than welcoming and helpful. I would highly recommend interning with the VPO program to anyone who has an interest in the juvenile justice system.”

Five UCA students were inducted into the international sociology honors society, Alpha Kappa Delta, during the sociology department’s end-of-the-year awards and celebration potluck held on April 27. These students are distinguished at the university graduation ceremony by their aqua blue tassels that they wear. New members are Dulce Armas, Kathy Hill, Peggy Natalie Leong, Cassey Misee, and Cathrine Schwader.

Standards for eligibility include the following:

1. Must be an officially declared sociology major or demonstrate a serious interest in sociology within an official program of the host institution.
2. Must be at least a junior (third year) by standards of the host institution.
3. Must have accumulated the equivalent of an overall GPA of 3.3 (by a four point scale where: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0) and rank in the top 35% of their class in general scholarship.
4. Must have maintained the equivalent of a 3.0 GPA in sociology courses taken at the host institution prior to initiation.
5. Must have completed at least four regular courses in sociology prior to initiation (exclusive of extension or courses graded pass/fail).

The induction ceremony typically is held in April. Please contact the Chapter Advisor, Ms. Mimi Rohweder, if you have any questions or would like additional information (mimir@uca.edu, 450-5584).
Kristen Sobba received the Spring 2011 Katherine Hinson Outstanding Sociology Student Award. She was chosen for her outstanding work with the UCA Sociology Club Survey on Norms and Values and for her research on slavery and human trafficking. Kristen presented her paper “Sex Trafficking in Asia: The Ins and Outs of an Unjust Trade” at the Southwestern Social Science Association annual meeting in March in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Kristen received a Bachelor of Science degree in May with a double major in Sociology (criminology concentration) and Psychology. She was awarded a graduate assistantship to the University of Arkansas—Little Rock where she begins classes in August for a Master of Arts in Criminal Justice. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in the same field.

“Everyone in the department made my UCA experience very fun and enjoyable. My first time entering the department to declare a double major was very relaxing and it felt like home. The professors make sociology that much more fun because they are all very passionate about teaching it. My advice to students: Make yourself get out of your comfort zone and challenge your intellect and abilities because it will make you a better sociologist and overall stronger individual. Do not limit yourself. By forcing myself to take on challenges such as conferences, leadership activities, etc., I did indeed become a stronger and more proud individual. It also gives you a feeling of accomplishment which is one of the best feelings to have. Also, try not to stress to the point of driving yourself mad because all that does is cause more stress, but always do the best you can. Lastly, don’t regret your mistakes, learn from them!”

Kristen Sobba 2011