



## New Faculty Join Sociology Department

Check your backpacks! We have two new faculty members joining us this semester.

### Kyle Knight

earned his bachelor's degree in Marketing from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2006. He earned his master's degree in Sociology in 2008, and defended his doctoral dissertation (the final requirement for the Ph.D.) in May 2012. Both degrees were earned at Washington State University.

Kyle is an environmental sociologist whose research focuses on understanding the various social forces that drive environmental degradation and advances toward environmental reform and improvement. He uses quantitative cross-



national data to investigate such issues as environmental sustainability, organic agriculture, environmental concern, and resource consumption.

His research has been published in *Social Science Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Society and Natural Resources*, and *Population and Environment*. His most recent work is a collaborative

project with his advisor, Eugene Rosa, and Juliet Schor of Boston College which assesses the effect of working hours on resource demands in high-income countries. In his spare time, Kyle enjoys backpacking, attending concerts, and spending time with his wife, Echo Logan.

**Christina Steidl.** After earning a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Social Sciences/Human Development from the University of Chicago, Christina spent several years helping to develop the First Year Experience program at Kent State University in Ohio and then moved south to earn her Ph.D. in Sociology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She defended her doctoral dissertation (the final requirement for the Ph.D.) in July 2012. Christina's areas of expertise include social inequality, sociology of education, and social theory. Much of her research takes an intersectional approach to issues of inequality and power dynamics in the U.S. education system. Her current research

focuses on how intersectional statuses (of race, class, and gender) and institutional context influence undergraduates' choice of majors. Other projects have explored: the relationship between re-segregation in public schools and racial achievement gaps; how the gendered nature of U.S. post-secondary institutions impact faculty career trajectories; and historical transformations in commemorative spaces and narratives surrounding the May 4, 1970, shootings at Kent State. Christina likes to split her spare time between social justice work and outdoor activities like rock climbing, backpacking, and kayaking.



## Community Service Internship in the Works

For the past year, **Dr. Teresa Terrell**, Adjunct Associate Professor of Sociology, has been developing an internship course for the Department of Sociology. Our goal is to create a course structure through which sociology majors can learn about how non-profit organizations and/or social service agencies operate, and develop some insight and analysis (through readings or a course paper) by which they mold that experience into a three-credit course.

We hope to have this course fully developed and available by the end of the next academic year



(Summer or Fall 2013). In order for us to learn more about the administration of this course and to develop some policies and procedures, two students have volunteered as our "experimental subjects," doing this 125 hour internship in part for their own experience and education (i.e. for course credit), and in part to help the sociology department get some of its own experience overseeing internships.

**Maggie Sierras-Trotts** (pictured right-top) has turned a paper she wrote in Research Methods two years ago, into an internship with the Girl Scouts of North-Central

Alabama ([www.girlscoutsna.org](http://www.girlscoutsna.org)). Maggie is working on organizing and analyzing data from a survey that was previously conducted by the organization. The data includes demographic information about the Scouts and how these girls feel about their experiences. Maggie is planning to incorporate what she learns into an extension of her research paper.

**Regina Bauer** (pictured right-bottom) has turned her previously planned volunteer work at the National Children's Advocacy Center ([www.nationalcac.org](http://www.nationalcac.org)) into an internship as well. For the academic portion of the internship, Regina is developing a reading list, from which she will write an analysis that applies academic research to her internship work at CAC.



## Recent Grads

In the past year (Summer 2011 to Spring 2012) the following students graduated with a major in sociology:

Olivia Brannon  
Nicole Carter  
Kelly Hornbrook  
Rebecca Nunez  
Erycka Shorter  
Katilin Simpson  
Jennifer Suh  
Sharrian Taylor  
Talina Wesselman

## New AKD Members

**Alpha Kappa Delta** is the Sociology Honor Society. Students are eligible for membership in AKD if they meet the following criteria: GPA is in top 35% of their class (Junior or Senior), they have completed four sociology courses at UAH, and their GPA in sociology is greater than 3.0. This year, we inducted eight individuals:

Danielle Marie Atkins  
Whitney Suzanne Cosby  
Michelle Cominotto  
Kelsey McElroy  
Brenda M. Taylor-Moody  
Kelsey Thacker  
Alyson Thompson  
Maggie A. Sierras-Trotts

## Chair's Message: Back on Track!

*Greetings Students, Alumni, and Friends!*

The 2012-2013 academic year is looking grand for the UAH Sociology Department. Since last November, the new UAH President, Robert Altenkirch, has been steering this university's ship with a steady hand. As a result the faculty of our department and of the entire university have been able to return our attention to what we do best, and what we like to do the most—teach, research, and serve. Furthermore, both our university and the sociology program are growing again.

This a particularly auspicious time for the Sociology Department, as we find ourselves in a period of transition. We have recently experienced the departures of Dr. Mark Jones and Dr. Jason Smith, and Dr. Nancy Finley has indicated that she will be retiring at the end of 2012-13. This means replacing 60% of our full time faculty (three of our five full-time lines) within two years.

Fortunately, we have accomplished two-thirds of that. Two new

professors are joining us this semester—both with newly-minted Ph.D.'s. They are Dr. Christina Steidl (Emory University) and Dr. Kyle Knight (Washington State University). In these pages we tell you a bit about Christina and Kyle, and we also report on awards and milestones among our current students, provide some interesting alumni updates, and preview our plans to add a Community Service Internship course to our offerings.

The department is pursuing several other initiatives that I hope to tell you about in future newsletters. These include collaborations with Earth System Science (via Environmental Sociology), and with the new Science, Technology and Society cognate, which may begin as soon as Spring 2013. We are also tweaking our program's advising structure by creating a series of "tracks" for students to follow. You will hear more about these developments and others in future newsletters, emails, and other communications.

Finally, in May 2012, I was elected to serve as UAH Faculty Senate President for 2013-14. This

means that first I will serve as President-Elect for the 2012-13 (kind of like a Vice-President). I believe that this would be the first time a sociology professor has held this office. There is, of course, a downside in that the commitment entails taking some time out of my schedule. I will teach one less course a year, but probably end up busier than ever nonetheless. Of course, I will try to make sure that this has no impact on my work for the Sociology Department, which remains my first priority. (It is what I get paid for!)

Alumni: Please keep in touch. We professors love to hear from you, because you give meaning to our pasts, and current students love to hear about you, because you give them a glimpse into their futures. You motivate us all when you share your experiences, exploits, adventures, and careers. So contact me anytime at [mitch.berbrier@uah.edu](mailto:mitch.berbrier@uah.edu).

Mitch Berbrier  
Department Chair

## Sociology Honors and Scholarship Recipients



Each year, the Department of Sociology recognizes one student whose academic performance and/or recognizable potential for future performance is exemplary. This year that honor went to **Alyson Thompson**.

Alyson is a senior who expects to graduate in May 2013 with a degree in Sociology and a cognate in Global Studies. After graduating, she plans to pursue at least two more degrees, one in sociology with an emphasis on gender and race studies, and a second at a Christian Seminary, specializing in Christian Worldview and Apologetics.

Alyson enjoys studying culture and society and applying that knowledge toward the betterment of others. Her long-term goal is to work in an international Christian non-profit organization that

seeks to address issues of injustice.

In her own words, Alyson says, "It is my desire to be a part of helping others to live lives of freedom and wholeness. So in everything that I do, whether through my education, internships, volunteer work, church involvement, etc., I want to grow in knowledge and in skill to be better equipped to help."

We are pleased to announce that **Daniela Sanchez** is our new UAH Sociology Scholar. Daniela is a junior who expects to graduate in May 2014 with a degree in Sociology and a minor in Women's Studies.

The Sociology Department Scholarship was established in 2007, thanks to numerous gifts to our scholarship fund over many years, from students, faculty, Dean

Sue Kirkpatrick, and other friends, including one large gift from an anonymous donor.

The Sociology Scholarship is awarded only to full-time undergraduate students for their junior or senior year(s) who are pursuing a major in Sociology and who have maintained a grade point average of 3.0, with preference given to students who demonstrate financial need in order to be able to pursue a degree. Scholarships are awarded by the University's Financial Aid Committee based on recommendations of a committee composed of the sociology chair and at least one tenured faculty member in the department. There have been two past UAH Sociology Scholars: **Delilah Pettitt ('09)** and **Shermete Brown ('10)**.

Congratulations, Alyson and Daniela!

## Life Is an Alumnus Journey

– **Nikki Worthy ('10)** is working at Phoenix, a non-profit social service organization serving Huntsville and Madison County since 1973. At Phoenix, Nikki's responsibilities span two service programs.



In the Milestones Program, Nikki works as a Job Coach for people with significant disabilities. The goal is to help people get jobs and stay in them. She said, "As a Job Coach, I help prepare our clients for interviews, attend orientation with them after they are hired, work alongside them for awhile, until they learn their tasks, the rules, and appropriate work place behavior. I also look for any on-the-job accommodations that may be needed, and work with the employer to access and implement those accommodations."

Nikki also works as a Case Manager in the Social Security Payee Program. In this role, she helps clients find housing, get groceries, get transportation (e.g. to doctor's appointments), arrange their finances, help them apply for social services (e.g. food stamps, Medicare). "Basically, I assist them with their personal needs and budget all of those needs on their behalf with the very little amount of money they receive every month. I spend some time listening to them too. Sometimes our clients just need someone to listen to them," she said. "I guess we all do."

When not at work, Nikki spends time with her two daughters, ages 12 and 14. "I am really happy just being with the people I love," she said.

– **Veronica Ferreira ('10)** recently earned her M.A. in Sociology from the University of Iowa. Her thesis is "Marital



Happiness and Marital Satisfaction: A Test of the Impact of Role Conflict and Congruence." What did she do? First, Veronica noted that almost all research on marriage measures either "marital happiness" or "marital satisfaction." However, even though they are measured differently, these two concepts are treated as essentially the same thing in analyses. Veronica is trying to figure out if this matters: Would it make a difference to our policy or therapy recommendations if these two were better distinguished? Veronica's master's thesis analyzes data that begins the process of teasing these two apart. The thesis was so well received by her mentors that the sociology department at Iowa awarded Veronica a grant to turn her thesis into a published article. Congratulations, Veronica!

– **Susannah Torres ('07)** recently became certified by the BACB (Behavior Analyst Certification Board) as a BCaBA (Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst). Susannah works as a case manager and therapist at The Riley Educational and Behavioral Center (therileycenter.org). She works in both the early intervention program and with school age children.

– **Quinn Ottaway ('06)** is nearing completion of his M.A. in Sociology with a Graduate Certificate in Non-Profit Leadership, from Minnesota State University. While completing his thesis and internship, Quinn is living in Puget Sound, Washington. He recently received approval from University of Washington Medical Center to become a living organ donor, and he will be donating a kidney to Seattle Children's Hospital towards the end of August. This is an altruistic donation, as Quinn does not know the child who will receive it. I suggest we all pause, and take the word "awesome" seriously for a change.



– **Amanda Colvin ('05)** received her M.A. in Public Affairs here at UAH in 2006, and went on to complete her law degree at St. Louis University. She has worked as a legal intern for the Delinquency Division of the St. Louis County Family Court. After law school she volunteered for Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, a non-profit and *pro bono* legal service, working on orders-of-protection for abused women. Amanda remains in St. Louis, and works as an Associate at Bryan Cave LLP, an international law firm with specialization in virtually all areas of legal practice. Amanda's specialty is labor and employment law. Of her position Amanda says, "I'm quite proud of the firm, and proud to work here. It's one of the top law firms in the country, and it's regularly recognized for its stellar client service." Of her UAH Sociology experience she says, "It comes up more often than I would have expected in my profession, especially for jury selection issues, trying to gauge how a judge will respond to a particular legal argument, and trying to assess the motivations of witnesses. It has weaved in nicely with my career."

Amanda and Jason Felber, her husband of six years, are also getting to know their nine-month old son, Jack.

– **Sharrian Taylor ('12)** will enter graduate school this fall in the Nonprofit Management Certificate Program at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro ([www.uncg.edu/psc/mpa/nonprofitcert.html](http://www.uncg.edu/psc/mpa/nonprofitcert.html)). Congratulations, Sharrian!"



*Email alumni updates to [mitch.berbrier@uah.edu](mailto:mitch.berbrier@uah.edu). Check up on friends from years gone by joining our Facebook page (UAH SOCIOLOGY).*



### Department of Sociology

The University of Alabama  
in Huntsville  
344 Morton Hall  
Huntsville, Alabama 35899  
Phone: 256.824.6190  
Fax: 256.824.2387  
Email: [soc@uah.edu](mailto:soc@uah.edu)  
[www.uah.edu/sociology](http://www.uah.edu/sociology)

### Sociology Faculty and Staff

Mitch Berbrier  
[mitch.berbrier@uah.edu](mailto:mitch.berbrier@uah.edu)

Bhavani Sitaraman  
[bhavani.sitaraman@uah.edu](mailto:bhavani.sitaraman@uah.edu)

Nancy Finley  
[nancy.finley@uah.edu](mailto:nancy.finley@uah.edu)

Kyle Knight  
[kyle.knight@uah.edu](mailto:kyle.knight@uah.edu)

Christina Steidl  
[christina.steidl@uah.edu](mailto:christina.steidl@uah.edu)

Teresa Terrell  
[teresa.terrell@uah.edu](mailto:teresa.terrell@uah.edu)

Erin Reid  
[erin.reid@uah.edu](mailto:erin.reid@uah.edu)

### UAH Sociology News

is a publication of the Department of Sociology at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. It is published at least once a year and sent via email and USPS to departmental alumni, current sociology majors and minors, and other friends of the department. Visit us at [www.uah.edu/sociology](http://www.uah.edu/sociology).

# Donate to the Sociology Scholarship Fund!

Help make a Department of Sociology Scholarship available to students who need it. The scholarship will be awarded to students based on academic merit with consideration also given to financial need.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

*Department of Sociology*

*344 Morton Hall*

*Huntsville, AL 35899*

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