GREETINGS FROM UAH SOCIOLOGY

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In this edition of our newsletter I am happy to share with you the most noteworthy achievements of our students and faculty over the last year. But first, there are a few things I’d like to highlight.

Students and faculty alike have worked very hard to meet the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many adjustments, in both expectations and everyday activities, have been made. Nearly all courses in sociology are now offered online rather than in-person, and this transition was made rather gracefully, though not without a lot of sweat and frustration, by both faculty and students. I’m extremely proud of how we have all come together to deal with this period of crisis.

Before the pandemic made such an event impossible, we were very lucky to have sociologist Dr. Margaret Hagerman of Mississippi State University deliver a public lecture as part of the UAH Distinguished Speaker Series. Her talk on “White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America” was very insightful, and also quite timely given the wave of anti-racism activism and protests across the nation this summer which were sparked by the police killing of George Floyd.

At the beginning of this semester, we, along with most of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, made our move back to the renovated and expanded Morton Hall. Our new departmental home is in MOR 206. The building and our new offices are beautiful and modern. We look forward to when the halls and classrooms are filled with students and their intellectual energy. We are also excited about our new student space—the Sociology Computer Lab and Resource Center in MOR 015.

Looking ahead to Spring 2021, we are very pleased to offer a special topics course on the Sociology of Health, Illness, and Medicine taught by Dr. Isaac Sakyi-Addo, who studied medical sociology at the University of North Texas where he earned his Ph.D. We hope this course offers students conceptual tools and analytical perspectives to better understand the social dimensions of health and well-being, and to make sociological sense of the causes and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our brand-new Certificate in Social Data Analysis is also now up and running. We hope this credential will help students acquire tangible, technical, and marketable skills, allowing them to put into practice their sociological knowledge in a variety of careers that involve managing and analyzing qualitative or quantitative data. Let us know if you are interested in this program.

Finally, we really do love hearing from our alumni and learning about the awesome things they are up to. Please keep in touch after graduation and send us your updates!

Dr. Kyle Knight
Associate Professor and Chair
Hagerman Lecture Draws Packed Crowd

Dr. Margaret Hagerman, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Mississippi State University, presented a public lecture on March 9 in Wilson Hall. Based on her recently published book, *White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America* (NYU Press), Hagerman’s talk drew a sizeable crowd of students, faculty, and community members that packed the lecture hall and prompted engaged dialogue.

In Hagerman’s book she uses ethnography to explore how white children learn about race in the context of their everyday lives. It was the winner of the 2019 William J. Goode Book Award awarded by the American Sociological Association’s Section on Family and was a finalist for the 2019 C. Wright Mills Book Award given by The Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Earlier in the day, Hagerman met with sociology students in Qualitative Methods and Sociological Theory classes for roundtable lunch and discussion about her ethnographic research for her book.

This event was sponsored by the UAH Department of Sociology as part of the UAH Distinguished Speaker Series 2019-2020.

Certificate in Social Data Analysis

Earlier this year we received approval to begin offering a Certificate in Social Data Analysis, which is an interdisciplinary undergraduate program offered by the Department of Sociology and consists of 15-17 hours of coursework focused on research methods and data analysis. This certificate will help students in any major to develop skills in collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating results from social science data (i.e., data on human attitudes, behaviors, and patterns of social interaction).

The program is designed to prepare students to obtain entry-level positions in careers that involve managing and analyzing qualitative or quantitative data. The certificate also provides a strong foundation for students planning to go to graduate school. For details, go here: uah.edu/ahs/departments/sociology/programs/certificate
Kyle Knight published a revised and updated version of his article on “Environmental Sociology” for Oxford Bibliographies in Environmental Science in 2020. He also presented his research on “Climate Change Perception in African Nations” at the annual meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association held at Alabama State University.

Jennifer Sims published two new articles on racial perception, and her co-authored book Mixed-Race in the US and UK won the 2020 Stanford M. Lyman Distinguished Book Award from the Mid-South Sociological Association. In addition, this year Sims was interviewed by The Washington Post for a story about mixed-race celebrity Meghan Markle, by The Chronicle of Higher Education for insight on teaching about racism, and by WHNT News 19 Huntsville for their coverage of social impacts of Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, she has developed online versions of all of her classes.

Christina Steidl has published two research articles about how military service influences the educational and career trajectories of veterans. The first, “Soldiers to Scientists,” published in Socius, finds that U.S. military veterans, and especially female veterans, earn STEM degrees at higher rates than their civilian counterparts. The second, “Military Service and STEM Employment,” published in Social Science Research, finds that veterans are more likely (than those who have never served in the military) to get jobs in STEM fields—and that this true at all levels of education. This research project was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Bob Thomson debuted a course on white collar crime in the Spring 2020 semester, as well as Sociology of Religion in the fall. In Spring 2021, White Collar Crime will be adapted to an online format to broaden access during COVID-19. Thomson has also published five journal articles over the past year, including “Religion in Civil Society: The Influence of Black Religious Ecology on Crime in the South,” published in Journal of Quantitative Criminology, and “The Very Ivory Tower: Racial Stratification among US Physicists and Biologists,” coauthored by Esmeralda Sánchez Salazar and Elaine Howard Ecklund, which was recently published in Ethnic and Racial Studies.
The department congratulates another great cohort of graduates!

Houzston Belew  
Micah Bonds  
L.A. Brown  
Lilian Johnson  
Isaac Laws  
Olivia Madewell  
Alexcia Marshall  
Cassandra Nolen  
C.J. Strong  
Kyle Swearengen  
Kris Washington

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

CONGRATULATIONS 2019-2020 GRADUATES

The department congratulates another great cohort of graduates!

Houston Belew  
Micah Bonds  
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Cassandra Nolen  
C.J. Strong  
Kyle Swearengen  
Kris Washington

SOCIOLOGY CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS

Ten sociology majors completed capstone academic or internship projects:

- Hannah Crouse – “Media Portrayals of Inmate Sexual Victimization by Staff in America’s Women’s Prisons”
- Jacob Greider – “Commuter Student Perceptions of Dining Dollars at UAH”
- Isaac Laws – “Compliance with Safety Rules among Fast Food Workers”
- Kenzie Luttrell – “Disability in Higher Education”
- Olivia Madewell – “Is Age at First Marriage Correlated with Area of Residence?”
- Alexcia Marshall – “Jubilee Christian Academy”
- Cassandra Nolen – “Crisis Services of North Alabama”
- C.J. Strong – “Jubilee Christian Academy”
- Kyle Swearengen – “His Way Recovery Center”

SOCIOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Rebecca Campbell (pictured right) is the winner of the Sociology Scholarship Award for the 2020-2021 academic year. The scholarship was established in 2007 thanks to numerous gifts from students, faculty, Dean Sue Kirkpatrick, and other friends. The scholarship is awarded only to full-time undergraduate Sociology majors for their junior or senior year(s).

OUTSTANDING SOCIOLOGY MAJOR

Each year, the Department of Sociology recognizes one student whose academic performance and/or recognizable potential for future performance is exemplary. The recipient of the 2020 award was Olivia Madewell (pictured right).

STUDENTS PRESENT AT MSSA

Two undergraduate sociology scholars presented at the Mid-South Sociological Association Annual Conference this year. Cassandra Nolen and Alex Haynes co-presented their research with Dr. Jennifer Sims at the conference held virtually October 14-17. The Sociology students were able to extend their Research or Creative Experience for Undergraduates Summer Program (RCEU) at UAH by presenting at a national conference. Both students co-authored their presentations under the research direction of Sims. Haynes and Nolen are also second authors on papers from Sims’ 2019 and 2020 research projects and both papers are presently under review at peer reviewed journals.

Nolen assisted in the research entitled “Sign Here: Best Practices for Protecting LGBTQIA Youth Research Participants” as a part of a larger interview project by Sims. Haynes collaborated on “How We See Race: Using Eye-Tracking Technology to Explore Racial Perception.” The research was conducted in the VUE lab in the summer of 2019 using GazePoint eye-tracking bar and software.

Both student researchers and their projects are great examples of the quality of preparation sociology students are able to gain in quantitative and qualitative research methods. For an extended article on these presentations visit:


Pictured above: Cassandra Nolen  
Alex Haynes
Sociology faculty/student teams continue to earn Research or Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU) Summer Program grants this year, continuing a department history of achievement. Students in the RCEU Summer Program receive a stipend for undertaking activities within a research or creative work project under the direct supervision of a UAH full-time faculty member or researcher. The project typically lasts for 10 to 12 weeks in the summer with contact hours of approximately 32-40 hours per week. Sociology RCEU awardees reflect an impressive array of research topics.

- Kathryn Carroll worked with Dr. Robert Thomson on the project “Black or White: Alabama Leaders’ responses to protests following the George Floyd Murder,” Summer 2020.
- Rhys Fletcher worked with Dr. Christina Steidl on the project “Job Search Practices among Low Income Workers,” Summer 2020.
- Alex Haynes worked with Dr. Jennifer Sims on the project “How we see race: Using eye-tracking technology to explore racial perception,” Summer 2019.
- Aislinn Brookshire worked with Dr. Christina Steidl on the project “Gender Performance and Gendered Perceptions in the U.S. Military,” Summer 2017.
- Morgan Justice worked with Dr. Christina Steidl on the project “‘There is no man—that’s the point’: Power and Gender Performance in Lesbian Relationships,” Summer 2013.

Did you know that as an undergraduate sociology major there are many opportunities for you to get paid to do research with faculty and gain valuable experience? It’s true! Check out these opportunities:

**UAH Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU)**
This program is a great opportunity for students to work on research projects with faculty in various disciplines over the summer. Students get one-on-one mentorship and learn valuable new research skills. There are two levels of participation by students, one with a stipend award and one without a stipend but with other benefits and the chance for a monetary prize. Applications for Summer 2021 will be accepted this Fall (deadline to be announced); keep in mind these projects may be carried out remotely. For more information go here: uah.edu/undergraduate-research/annual-events-outreach
National Science Foundation’s Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Program
This program offers students free travel, room and board, and a generous stipend for spending a summer on a research project with faculty at a university with an REU Site. Current opportunities for Summer 2021 include:

NSF REU Site: Social Network Analysis for Solving Minority Health Disparities
This REU program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln involves learning social network analysis and applying these research skills to faculty research projects addressing racial health disparities. Priority application deadline is February 1, 2021 and the final deadline is March 1, 2021. For information go here: mhdi.unl.edu/mhdi-srp

NSF REU Site: Research Institute in Sociology and Social Inequality
This REU program at Texas A&M University will involve students in ongoing faculty research projects on topics such as residential segregation and disparities in criminal justice outcomes. The application deadline is February 15, 2021. For information go here: liberalarts.tamu.edu/sociology/reu

NSF REU Site: Disparities in the Criminal Justice System
This REU program at the University of South Carolina focuses on research addressing the role of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in explaining criminal behavior and understanding criminal justice practices. The deadline for application will be announced soon. For more information, go here: sc.edu/study/colleges_scholasrtsandsci/ce/iminology_and_criminal_justice/beyond_the_classroom/reu/index.php

NASA Develop
This program gives students and recent graduates in all disciplines who are interested in environmental issues an opportunity to conduct research as part of an interdisciplinary team and develop technical and communication skills. DEVELOP participants receive hourly pay for their work. Applications for Summer 2021 will be accepted from January 18-February 26, 2021. For more information go here: develop.larc.nasa.gov/apply.php

Opportunities for Undergraduates to Present Research at Conferences
Presenting at academic conferences is not just for your professors! If you’ve completed a research project, or even just written a research paper for a class, you too can go to a conference and present your work. The Dean’s Office provides up to $330 per year to undergraduates to attend and present research at conferences. The following conferences are welcoming places for students to get experience presenting their work as a talk or poster. Many also offer specific programs for undergraduates, travel grants, and student paper competitions with monetary prizes. Talk with your professors about it and consider participating in one of the conferences below. Keep in mind that many if not all of these conferences will be held virtually in 2020-2021, but you can still get your registration fees funded.

Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association
In lieu of a conference, A-MSA plans to hold an online student paper competition in Spring 2021. For more info, go here: a-msa.org

Southeastern Undergraduate Sociology Symposium
This undergraduate conference is held annually. The 2020 meeting was held at Emory University in Atlanta. See their website for updates on the next conference, which is to be announced soon. The deadline for submission is typically towards the end of January. For more info, go here: sociology.emory.edu/SEUSS

Southern Sociological Society
This conference will be held April 7-10, 2021, in Jacksonville, Florida. The deadline for submissions is November 6, 2020. UAH Sociology is a Departmental Member of SSS, so you will not have to pay annual dues in order to present at this conference. For more info, go here: southernsociologicalsociety.org/meeting.html

Mid-South Sociological Association
This conference is typically held in October of each year. In 2019 it was held in Jackson, MS. Check out their website for information on next year’s meeting. For more info, go here: midsouthsoc.org

American Sociological Association
The annual meeting of the ASA will be held in Chicago on August 7-10, 2021. This conference offers numerous programs and opportunities for undergraduates. The deadline to submit will be announced soon, but is generally in January. For more info, go here: asanet.org/annual-meeting-2021
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