Chair’s Note

To paraphrase the ancient Greek Philosopher Heraclitus, the only constant is change. Our students change, our college changes, our world changes. And I firmly believe the discipline of sociology is essential to help us understand, plan, and thrive in that change. WAC Sociology continues to change to offer our students the opportunities to learn, plan, and thrive in the world around them.

We are pleased to welcome a new faculty member to our department this year. Nick Garcia comes to us from a program in Rural Sociology at Ohio State University and will be adding to the sociology curriculum in exciting ways. In addition to a focus on rural communities, Professor Garcia’s teaching and research interests encompass environmental sociology, food and agriculture, activism, and inequalities. He will allow us to expand our course offerings in these areas as well as increase collaboration with the Center for Environment and Society and WC’s new Eastern Shore Food Lab.

Sociology really lends itself to interdisciplinary collaborations and we are playing well with others around campus too. Our course catalog is continuing to grow with new offerings for students that will contribute to a variety of programs including Justice, Law & Society, Public Health, Environmental Science and Studies, Black Studies, Gender Studies, and the First Year Seminar. The issues in our world connected to these programs are changing and we are working to contribute to the analytic skills Washington College students develop as they head out in the world to make their mark.

I was really pleased to see one of our alumna return to campus at the start of the fall semester to be recognized for the mark she is making in the world. I invite you to read in this newsletter about the good work Adrienne Nash Melendez, ’05, is doing with the education in sociology she received at Washington College. And read about the other wonderful experiences, accomplishments, and recognitions of our students both on and off campus over the past year. We look forward to another year preparing Washington College students for a changing world, knowing they can do great things!

~ Dr. Erin Anderson
Faculty Spotlights

Welcome Professor Nick Garcia!

**Nick Garcia** is the second alumni from The Ohio State University to join Team Sociology at WAC. His background as a rural sociologist concentrates on stratification and spatial dimensions of inequality. His dissertation research addressed how variation in disability prevalence, industrial composition, and state legislatures have compromised the effectiveness of the Americans with Disabilities Act in rural places. Nick is an active member of the Rural Sociological Society and an advocate of subnational research in social inequality. As a rural sociologist, Nick is eager to work with students to connect sociology to activities on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. The food system, extractive industrial activities, and competing stakeholders in development each present unique opportunities for student learning through immersive projects in the area.

**Dr. Libby Yost** has continued to work on the Public Health minor, expanding the Washington College departments, courses, and internship opportunities that contribute to the minor as well as researching partnerships with graduate programs in Public Health. Her goal is to provide undergraduate students with a solid interdisciplinary foundation in the area of Public Health that will make our students competitive for careers and graduate level work in the field. She has also continued to develop new courses for the Sociology Department., including Sociology of Aging, Sociology of Disability, and a new First Year Seminar on Health and Technology. In the Health and Technology class, first year students learn to evaluate how technology impacts their lives and test out three new apps for health. Dr. Yost, along with Prof. Marianne Sade of Miller Library, was awarded a competitive grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to incorporate library and information literacy instruction into this First Year Seminar to evaluate best practices for at-risk first-year students. As one of the five sites to receive such a grant they presented their findings at an IMLS conference and have a forthcoming article on the project. The Sociology of Aging course took students off campus and into the larger Chestertown community to work with older adults. The course culminated in students designing ideal senior living communities and presenting them to older adults. Students in the Sociology of Disability course had the opportunity to travel to Washington, DC to tour Gallaudet University, a historically Deaf and hard of hearing institution, to learn more about Deaf culture and deaf education. Because of her awareness and contributions in the areas of aging and disability through her teaching and research, Dr. Yost was elected to serve on the Southern Gerontological Society’s Leadership team, Board of Directors at Homeports in Chestertown, and the Board of the ARC of Northern VA. Dr. Yost is on leave during the fall 2018 semester working on a project that evaluates differences in technology and well-being among older adults in rural and urban areas.
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Rachel Durso has continued her partnership with the Washington College GIS Program and the Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence (MSCFV) working to improve rural domestic violence victims’ access to resources. On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, victims of domestic violence encounter many challenges including social isolation and reduced access to a number of important resources such as transportation, affordable housing, child care, good-paying jobs, and places to receive health care. This past spring, the team received additional grant funding to build a mapping application that can be used by MSCFV staff to assist clients and MSCFV leadership and Washington College researchers to better understand these challenges spatially. The mapping application creates an interactive dashboard map (kind of like a more detailed customizable Google Map with additional tools), for each of the five counties MSCFV served. The maps contain MSCFV client data, public data (ex: unemployment rates, internet coverage, public transportation routes), standard of living measures (ex: healthcare facilities, school districts, daycares, grocery stores), and crime-related data (ex: protective orders, proximity to police stations). Users can build customized maps that show different variables and also get information about specific points on the map. For instance, if a user clicks on an icon indicating a healthcare facility, they will get a pop-up window that tells them additional information such as the doctors in the practice, their specialties, whether they provide drug and alcohol treatment, and whether they have experience handling patients who have experienced a sexual assault.

One function of these mapping dashboards, is that they will be used by MSCFV staff to assist clients and to better understand the barriers their clients face when they are trying to access resources. For instance, if a client has to move to another county, he or she may be concerned about housing affordability, access to healthcare services, receiving reliable, affordable internet coverage, and being close to stores that accept SNAP benefits. A case manager could use the mapping dashboard to help the client make informed decisions about where they could potentially move that would meet these criteria. The team is currently piloting these maps with MSCFV staff and using feedback from users to build in new variables, improve functions, or expand data available for different mapping features.

Dr. Durso presented findings from this project at the annual meeting for Southern Sociological Society this past spring and will also present at the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology and the Mid-South Sociological Association meetings this fall. She was also the subject of a Washington College Faculty Focus and recorded a spot for the nationally syndicated public radio program The Academic Minute (find it at academicminute.org).

In personal news, Dr. Durso was awarded a research sabbatical for fall 2017, which she used to work on some research collaborations with her research partners at Ohio State University and Northwestern University. She also used that time to do something else important, get married. Professors Yost and Anderson helped represent #TeamSociology at the wedding.
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Erin Anderson has stayed busy as department chair for another year. In between working on department schedules, assessment reports, catalog revisions, advising, and teaching she has been able to expand her research on gender and leadership. The Girl Scouts of the USA identifies itself as the “largest leadership organization for girls in the world.” The organization has existed in the U.S. since 1912 and currently claims more than 2.5 million members. Dr. Anderson has studied various aspects of the organization for years, including a 2010 article in the journal Girlhood Studies focusing on how badges and activities changed over the organization’s first century. Her current work is looking at another level of the organization: leaders. During her spring 2018 sabbatical, she interviewed dozens of Girl Scout leaders across the country about how the organization and the women involved work to develop leadership qualities in the girl members. Knowing more about how the leaders, as the intermediary between the official organization and the members themselves, perceive leadership and engage girls in goal setting, activities, and community is critical to understand what girls experience in their socialization toward leadership goals and roles. Dr. Anderson has presented initial findings from this research over the past year at the Southern Sociological Society annual meeting and the Sociologists for Women in Society summer meeting.

As she works on finishing this research for publication she’s also asking another question about gender and leadership: What happens when the Boy Scouts invite the girls? The Boy Scouts of America organization has implemented several changes with respect to membership in recent years and reactions have been strong, in both positive and negative ways. Dr. Anderson is working with a student researcher to better understand public reactions to the changes in what is now Scouts, BSA and how this reflects fears or opportunities about gender and leadership in the contemporary U.S.

In addition to her research and work on campus, Dr. Anderson has joined the editorial board of the American Sociological Association’s Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology (TRAILS). TRAILS is an online peer reviewed library of teaching resources which includes a wide variety of materials sociologists might use in their course design, instruction, or assessment. Dr. Anderson serves as the area editor for Social Theory and also assists in review of materials for Introduction to Sociology courses.

Now that you know what we’ve been up to we would love to hear from alumni! Have you found your

Path to Passion

Keep in touch with us and let us know!

https://www.washcoll.edu/alumni/path-to-passion/volunteer/
Sociology Standouts

Congratulations to the winners of the 2018 Sociology Senior Awards!

The Margaret Horsely Award, given to the graduating major or majors who, in the opinion of the faculty and students of the Department of Sociology, have shown in his or her work the clearest understanding of human social behavior, was awarded to Rachel Martinez. Kaitlynn Ecker received the Sociology Service Award, given to the graduating senior who, in the opinion of the department and its students, has made, through service, the greatest contribution to the sociology program and to Washington College.

Sociology Major Wins College’s Louis L. Goldstein ‘35 Award

Rachel Martinez, of San Pedro, California, a sociology major with minors in political science and gender studies, won the Louis L. Goldstein ‘35 Award for a graduating senior who, in the opinion of the faculty, has demonstrated unusual interest, enthusiasm, and potential in the field of public affairs.

WC Soc Represents at ESS

Kaitlynn Ecker, ’18, presents her Senior Capstone research

“Presenting my research at the Eastern Sociological Society Conference in Baltimore was a great experience and I am glad I had the opportunity to share my work with others! Because the conference took place in February, I had a chance to receive valuable feedback and have discussions with researchers from various backgrounds before my thesis presentation in April. Public speaking is an essential skill to have throughout life and is something I can always improve upon, and it was nice to present to an audience outside of my peers and professors here at Washington College. I also really enjoyed listening to students’ presentations from other colleges and universities. One of the best parts of sociological research is that it covers such an extensive range of topics, so I learned about things such as Favelas in Rio de Janeiro, the necessity of gender inclusion in STEM fields, and white antiracism activists to name a few. This was an amazing opportunity and I recommend future sociology students to attend and have the chance to extend their networks and knowledge.”
Sociology Standouts

WC Recognizes Alumna Achievements

At the Fall 2018 Convocation Adrienne Nash Melendez, ’05, received the Washington College Alumni Horizon Ribbon. This award formally identifies and recognizes outstanding leadership, service, or scholarship by alumni who have graduated within the last 15 years.

Since she graduated from college, Adrienne has built on the goals and skills she developed as a WC student active in the creation of the Service Council and Student Environmental Alliance at Washington College. Her Sociology major has helped her in a variety of positions where she’s worked on finding solutions to social problems. Her work has focused on issues related to homelessness, housing, social services, family, youth development, public health, and community development.

In her current role as a Management Analyst at the US Department of Veterans Affairs—The National Center of Homelessness Among Veterans Adrienne has been a driving force in a national initiative that emphasizes the power of community in helping the homeless. Her areas of expertise include program development and design, project management, grants management and compliance, data analysis and evaluation, partnerships and stakeholder relations, communication, conflict analysis and mediation, organizational and leadership development, change management, coaching/mentoring, and training/technical assistance. Thanks to the work Adrienne has done, since 2010 more than 600,000 veterans and their families have found homes or been prevented from falling into homelessness.

Alumni Update

Nicholas O’Meally, ’15, Double Major in Sociology and Theatre

“After receiving my bachelor’s degree in Sociology, I attended the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy and Practice for my master’s degree in social work. While enrolled, I focused in clinical social work with children and adolescents. My background in Sociology aided me in my ability to discuss topics such as socioeconomics and cultural competency with my peers, and being able to analyze the ways in which we are influenced and labeled by society aided me in seeing the realities of my clients. Additionally, my undergraduate studies in feminist theory helped me look closer at the ways in which men talk about mental health differently from women.

Having earned both my Master’s of Social Work and my state licensure, I am now employed as a permanency caseworker in the Greater Philadelphia Area. My role is to aid foster children and foster families through the adoption process, and to help new families interested in adopting become certified. Sociology taught me how to confront the racial and economic biases we all inherently have, and that we must look further into why society deems certain behaviors as more acceptable than others. In my everyday practice, I must confront expectations I may have when walking into a client’s home or when asking them about their beliefs surrounding discipline and child rearing. Sociology not only challenged me to look at our world from a detached lens, but prepared me for a career in social work by forcing me to remove my own values while helping others improve their lives.”
Internship Spotlight

Allison Zell, ‘19, participated in the Social Welfare Field Experience Course

“Interning at the Kent County Behavioral Health Unit was an amazing experience! I was able to sit in on counseling sessions with real patients, earning a unique experience. The team I worked with would have meetings every Monday, where I was able to learn about other patients within the unit. I got to travel around the area to different patients; some Tuesdays we would spend time in the local school. Gaining experience in this area helped me decide on my future career path. With the internship, I was able to determine what I did and did not like about working in an office and this type of work. The group I was able to work with were so helpful and provided a lot of insight for different careers.”

Sociology Goes Global

Kelsey McNaul, ‘19, Double Major in Sociology and Environmental Studies, studied abroad in Hong Kong at Lingan University

“Sociology students are taught to perceive the world through sociological lenses. This entails recognizing structural and institutional patterns beyond the individual that dictate the norms and patterns of society. Being socialized into one society can make it very difficult to put on this sociological lens and study other societies without an air of judgement, confusion, or misunderstanding. Social structures and patterns vary across the world, and to best understand this, we should experience these differences if we are in the privileged position to travel and do so.

Studying sociology abroad strengthened my sociological lens and was one of my most valuable experiences in my education. In doing so, not only was I taught sociology in a Hong Kong classroom, but I lived and recognized many of Hong Kong’s social realities in my five months living there. I even caught a glimpse into the social realities of many countries around the world as I befriended and traveled with other international students. This experience opened my eyes to the many ways that societies and people are simultaneously different and the same. It is in the spirit of sociology to abandon our prejudices and misconceptions to truly seek to understand the social world. There is no better way to do this than to experience life abroad, and for this reason, I encourage all sociology students to examine the opportunities available to them to travel and study abroad.”
“Heightening Awareness of Resources for Rural Victims of Intimate Partner Violence”

This study aims to provide potential solutions to increase visibility and overall awareness of Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence (MSCFV), a critical resource for victims of intimate partner violence on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. In conducting focus group sessions with clients of Mid-Shore, over fifty percent indicated they were unaware that MSCFV existed or had major misconceptions of the organization. As prior literature has revealed that rural victims of IPV experience unique barriers to help seeking compared to their urban counterparts, Facebook Advertisements and Cross-Sector Collaborations have been identified as effective on and offline strategies to address the lack of awareness surrounding this organization.

“Accommodations of Elementary Students with ADHD: A Comparison of Public and Private Schools”

My thesis examines the accommodations provided to students with ADHD in Public and Private Schools, and compared the types of accommodations used as well as the success of the accommodations for students between the two types of schools. Findings suggested comparable to identical accommodations used in both private and public schools, and opinions on accommodations were almost identical in comparison.


This study considers an historical race related movement with a contemporary one. Sociological insights helps to explain the recurrence of black liberation movements in the U.S. Contrasting the movements and applying sociological theory highlighted differences in gender politics and protest strategies utilized by the Black Panther movement of the 1960s and 1970s with those of Black Lives Matter movement today.

“The Current Impacts of Social Media on Romantic Relationships”

For my thesis, my research was focused on the current impacts we see in modern romantic relationships due to rise of social media. The focus of the research was to determine if there was a positive or negative impact due to the new relationship “rules” we see all over our social media. To examine this, I surveyed 18-24 year olds and asked them questions regarding their social media usage, relationship history, and their relationship dynamic on social media involving their romantic relationships.
Nate Krimmel

“The Impact of Physical Disability on Identity”

This research aims to provide an overview and understanding of the impact of physical disability on identity. Through the detailing and analyzing of statistics, personal narrative, gender, emotional management, and identity, this research fills in gaps in the literature on physical disability.

Rachel Martinez

“Ending the War on Nipples: Creating a Path to Equality for Gendered Bodies”

In my thesis, I examined the sexualization of women’s bodies and how that has led to their unequal treatment under the law, specifically in the form of public indecency laws. I detailed the process of sexualization, its effects on women, how women’s body parts can be desexualized, and the approach that we need to take in order to bring about gender equality under the law. This approach is centered in objectification theory, which brings to light the separation between the male gaze and a defined community standard which can be used as an argument for the legality of women’s toplessness. I conclude by laying out a multi-pronged path forward, emphasizing that we must change public opinion, argue these cases in the state courts, and push for overarching gender-equality legislation to achieve the end goal: gender equality under the law.

Lae’Shawn Morris

“Insight on Black Male Engagement in Crimes Incentivized by Economic Gain”

This literature review utilizes research on stereotype threat and General Strain Theory and proposes theoretical conclusions to explain Black male engagement in crimes incentivized by economic gain. Black male stereotypes and historical discrimination against Black individuals in the U.S. are considered as factors that impact incentivized crimes.

Hannah Niles

“Let’s Talk About Sex: A Comparative Analysis of Sex Education Policy in Public Schools — California vs. Texas”

A comparative analysis of sexual education policy between California and Texas, focusing on the difference between abstinence-based and comprehensive curriculums. A sociological analysis of why certain groups and certain areas are more susceptible to teen pregnancy and STDs using Conflict Theory, Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory.
Helene Schlitt

“Mental Health in College Students: Depression and Anxiety, Substance Abuse, and Suicide”

The research I conducted for my senior SCE was on mental health in college students. I specifically looked into the common coping mechanisms between men and women and how they varied between the two genders. From the research that I gathered I looked into how depression affects college students and how substance abuse can be viewed as its own mental illness or a coping mechanism of depression and anxiety. I also looked at common patterns of suicide attempts and how suicidal thoughts and actions affect male and female college students.

Alexis Stella


My thesis is a conjoined English and Sociology thesis. It is a content analysis of African American literature. I use Black feminist theory to analyze the literature, looking specifically at the authors’ representations of Black women throughout historical eras such as the Antebellum Era and the Reconstruction/Jim Crow Era.

Faculty Recommended Reading

- Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood by Trevor Noah
- Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by JD Vance
- Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond
- Struggling for Air: Power Plants and the “War on Coal” by Jack Lienke and Richard Revesz
Faculty Research

Publications


Presentations


Interdisciplinary Minors

Justice, Law, & Society

The program in Justice, Law & Society (JLS) at Washington College is an interdisciplinary minor that draws from the academic fields of sociology, criminology, anthropology, business management, philosophy, and political science. Courses associated with the minor expose students to diverse approaches to complex social problems associated with crime, government, and the law and provide them with national and global perspectives on these issues. Individuals who complete the JLS minor are ready for graduate programs in Criminology, Criminal Justice, Public Administration, and Sociology as well as law school studies and entry-level legal advocacy positions. The minor also prepares students to work in government positions at all levels, non-profit organizations, policy-oriented research centers and think tanks, and broadly within the field of criminal justice.

Recent JLS alumni who have entered the work force directly have found positions with the Center for Civil and Human Rights, Mentor Maryland, the State of Maryland Judiciary, the Baltimore City Police Department, and the New York County District Attorney’s Office. The program also encourages and helps to facilitate internships through the Washington Center as well as through the Washington College Career Center. Our students also frequently work as interns with the Washington College Geographic Information Systems Program where they learn geo-spatial technologies and assist faculty and researchers on grant-funded projects with organizations like the Maryland Highway Safety Office, the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, the Maryland Vehicle Theft Prevention Council, and the Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence.

Contact Dr. Rachel Durso at rdurso2@washcoll.edu for additional information.

Public Health Studies

Public health encompasses a growing and diverse array of fields. Careers in public health focus on major health concerns such as infectious diseases/pandemics, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, nutrition/obesity, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health, bio-terrorism, environmental health issues related to water/food/air quality, food (in)security, STDs, women’s health, and health concerns related to poverty/healthcare disparities both nationally and internationally. Gaining an interdisciplinary understanding of the physical, social, and cultural aspects of health and medicine prepares students for success in graduate training and careers of passion in medical and health fields.

At Washington College, the minor is designed to help students become familiar with the multidisciplinary nature of public health work, increase their awareness of the opportunities available in this diverse field, and inspire them to discover lives of purpose and passion through careers in health and medicine. After completing its second year, the Public Health minor is continuing to grow! In May, we graduated our first six students who completed the minor requirements and currently have more than 25 students pursuing the minor. Individuals who minor in Public Health are going on to work in healthcare fields and attend graduate school in a variety of health-related areas.

In the coming year, the WC Public Health program will partner with an increasing number of programs on campus. expand internship and research opportunities both locally and globally, and work towards institutional agreements and direct paths to graduate schools of public health for students who might be interested.

Contact Dr. Libby Yost at eyost2@washcoll.edu for more information.