The Social Connection: Sociology At Ashford University

Welcome From the Sociology Program Chair: Dr. A says 'Hey!'

Welcome fellow sociologists! I hope you are enjoying a great Summer! The Sociology faculty are very excited this Summer - myself and Dr. Nichole Boutte-Heiniluoma (Dr. B) will be attending the American Sociological Association (ASA) conference in San Francisco in August. Dr. B is presenting, and I will be attending the Department Chair conference to hear the latest approaches in sociology programs.

If you are attending ASA too, be sure to look for us and say 'Hi'!

I'm also excited about this newsletter because it will be introducing our sustainability initiatives and challenge in the Sociology Club as well as some latest research and innovations in this area – be sure to read on to hear all about it!

Sustainability is not only important to Ashford University, but it is also an important sociological issue, as it impacts our personal well being, and our future societal well being.

The Sociology team is committed to eco concerns being an integral part of our program, and we look forward to sharing with you, our passion for positive social and environmental impact!

Volume 2, Issue 3

Summer 2014

Inside this issue:

Welcome Message From Our Chair 1

Sociology Club News 1

From the Classroom to Reality 2

In The Know: Sociology In Action 2

Associate Faculty Spotlight 2

Sociology in the Real World 3

The Mentoring Relationship 3

Student Spotlight 3

Flexible Working Research 4

The Balancing Act 4

Student Spotlight 4

Associate Faculty Spotlight 5

Sociology Club Discussions 5

Associate Faculty Spotlight 5

Before You Go: References 6

Ashford Sociology Club News

Do you want a better world for the next generation? Did you know that we have the ability to positively impact our planet? To find out more about sustainable practices and to take part in these efforts, stop by the Sociology club in LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=5169150) to find out more about our upcoming sustainability challenge. The club will be the arena where we launch a sustainability challenge and support each other in changing elements of our lives to better the planet. This voluntary challenge will allow participants to interact with other like-minded individuals and to work towards making changes in our lives to do our part in creating differences we can see and feel. Drop on by, we look forward to seeing you there!

From The Classroom To Reality: Obesity

A popular topic today is the obesity problem in America. In fact, obesity is considered to be the top public health problem that is facing Americans because it increases a person's risk for many other health problems, such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and some types of cancers. In addition to the physical consequences, obesity can take a toll psychologically as individuals are more likely to suffer discrimination in terms of employment, health care, and other aspects of daily life due to the stigma that is attached to being overweight and obese.

This is deemed a significant social problem because 35.7 percent of Americans are considered to be obese and that has some serious implications in terms of the health care challenge for this population (CDC, 2013).

In our SOC 203 (Social Problems) course, students are asked to assess the qualifications of obesity as a social problem and use their sociological imaginations to consider each sociological perspective's explanation for obesity. In addition, they are offered the opportunity to discuss obesity in relation to the growing challenge of health care in the United States and the potential role of government in addressing the problem.

This is an important topic and students have the opportunity to learn about the social factors influencing weight patterns. If you find this topic interesting and would like to learn more about this and other social problems, then you may want to consider taking SOC203.

In The Know: Sociology In Action

"Sociologists have long been concerned with how to build the good society. The research on altruism, morality, and social solidarity directly addresses this question. In the broadest sense, the subject matter of altruism and social solidarity consists of activities intended to benefit the welfare of others. These activities span the micro-macro continuum, from individual, to interpersonal, to organizational, to global. They include phenomena such as generosity, forgiveness, unlimited love, virtue, philanthropy, intergroup cooperation, and universalizing solidarity.

The subject matter of morality entails distinctions between good and evil, and between right and wrong. Such distinctions are an important aspect of each person's thoughts, actions, and moral judgments. They are also a component of all cultural systems, providing meanings that define for each collective some sense of the desirable and the undesirable.

Norms regarding individual and intergroup relations are a part of these cultural systems. As a result, altruism and social solidarity are inevitably related to moral culture." –Excerpt from (ASA 2013)

Associate Faculty Spotlight: Linda Atkinson

Dr. Linda Atkinson is a stellar associate faculty member here at Ashford University. Dr. Atkinson has a B.A. in English from Skidmore College, an M.A. in Pastoral Theology from Barry University, and an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Argosy University.

Dr. Atkinson's background in English allows her to correct each paper for grammar and APA so the students can improve from week to week. With her business and sales experience, she can communicate with all sorts of students from various backgrounds.

She loves challenging student assumptions in their papers and discussion posts. By doing so, she creates an atmosphere in which the course can come alive!

For fun, she likes to travel (Italy, Brazil, Ecuador, Greece, India, and Egypt), garden (roses, orchids), read, practice yoga and teach meditation classes in Savannah. She is married to Dr. Stan Atkinson, a fellow professor (DBA in finance). They spend their free time gardening, cooking, and browsing antique stores together near their home in Savannah, Georgia.

Sociology in the Real World

Those about to graduate with a degree in Sociology may contemplate various career paths. There are academic and non-academic avenues that are open to the budding Sociologist and one only need to refine his or her interests a bit to identify great career options.

For example, those who are interested in service and working with under-served populations might choose a career working with the Mentally Disabled. In an article discussing this career option, Geenwood (2014) notes that Sociology majors with an interest in Human Services may find employment in the area of Social Work. She notes that "Although social workers typically have a degree in social work, a degree in a related field such as sociology is often acceptable to employers…" As of 2012 a Sociology major choosing this career path could expect to earn a median salary of 44,200 (Ibid).

Ultimately, as Banach (2014) notes, the best strategy for Sociology majors to find work that matters to them involves:

1. Evaluate your personal interests, strengths and weaknesses to determine which type of occupation is the most suitable for you.
2. Formulate a plan to achieve the minimum requirements for the position you seek.
3. Update your resume and begin applying for positions in your field.

As you embark on your job search, keep in mind that "Few jobs that sociologists do are labeled under the category of 'sociologist'. Nevertheless (Zevallos, 2014), the reality is that sociologists' general skills are useful in a wide range of professional contexts."

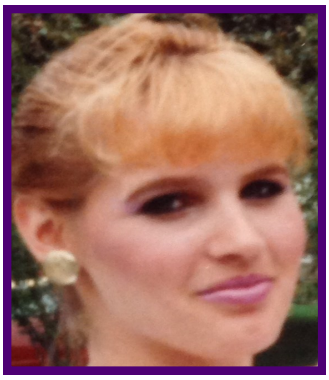
The Mentoring Relationship

We all stand upon the shoulders of those that came before us whether we realize it or not. Sometimes these relationships are very well defined such as a mentor and mentee. Mentoring has shown to be an effective tool that provides support and encouragement for students but the reciprocity involved with these relationships should not be understated.

When a student exhibits excellent work, tenacity, drive and determination, it is hard to ignore. Jacquelyn Petrovic, a recent Sociology graduate, has done just this. Striving for excellence would be a gross understatement for the kind of work she produces. I am honored to work with her in a mentorship capacity and I am anxious to see what paths she will take in the future. For now, she is working collaboratively on a publication with some of the Sociology faculty and her input has been invaluable. It has been a great experience to honor her hard work in a way that will produce even greater outcomes for her in the future but we have certainly gained from the experience as well. –Piece provided by Dr. Efua Akoma

Student Spotlight: Jacquelyn Petrovic

Jacquelyn (Jax) Petrovic graduated Ashford University summa cum laude with a BA's in Sociology and Social Science in 2013 and entered the MPA program one month later. Since beginning her journey towards her MPA, Jax has been accepted into Ashford's Sigma Epsilon Kappa and is President of the Sociology Club.
As her graduation date in 2014 gets closer, she is grateful for the many wonderful professors and peers that have touched her life along the way.



Ashford University has been and continues to be a catalyst for the changes that Jax wanted to see in her own life, and the ones she wants to generate in the lives of others. Through her work with the non-profits and the connections she has cultivated with politicians and social action groups where she lives in Maine, Jax has begun to apply the knowledge and skills that Ashford gave her the opportunity to acquire. Jax plans to continue her academic journey towards a doctorate in Organizational Psychology upon completion of her MPA.

Flexible Working Research

Dr. Alden recently presented at the Gerontology Society of America conference on how to 'sell' the concept of flexible employment to organizations when the 'right thing to do' argument isn't compelling enough. Dr. Alden has been building on this research for the last 10 years in Europe and the US.

In summary the research presents that flexible employment can benefit not only older workers, but workers at all life stages and for varied reasons. Flexible employment can include everything from teleworking, to compressed work weeks, job sharing and apprenticeships. Therefore it is especially helpful to those with significant care commitments, women seeking ways to return to work after child rearing, new career entrants and also those wishing to transition to retirement gradually. Dr. Alden presented that educating organizations of the many benefits of flexible employment options and changing ageist perspectives will support the acceptance of more options for workers. This work is being used in the next stage of Dr. Alden's research to collect all of the positive social and environmental impacts connected to flexible employment and as such was awarded a University Fellows Grant from Ashford in 2014. If you'd like to hear more about Dr. Alden's presentation, it has been recorded and can be accessed here: http://bpiedu.adobeconnect.com/p6v3zzgqwjc/

The Balancing Act

One day you may have plenty of free time and then life can take a turn and you can't seem to find a minute to get your school work done. There are things you can do to prepare yourself to be a successful student, especially if you are also an employee and/or caring for your family.
Consider these things:
1) Organize all of your materials for school in one place and when you are done with school work for the day, put them all back in the same place so you are ready to get back to school work the next day.
2) Use calendars to ensure your deadlines are all marked in places where you can either see them or are easily accessible.
3) Move up the deadline a day or two so you have enough time to complete your work plus extra time in case something unexpected comes up. This gives you time to seek assistance, get the feedback and make appropriate changes prior to the deadline.
4) Communicate your schedule to your family so they can work around it when necessary.
5) Reduce stress by taking breaks while working. Make it an active break and you can get some exercise in there as well.
6) Have a contingency plan-know who you can count on in case you need a baby sitter, to borrow a computer or laptop when yours crashed or is in the repair shop, or alternate places to go where you can connect to the Internet.
7) Contact your instructor as early as you can should a problem arise. They may have suggestions or resources to help you out.
8) Make sure that all of your work is submitted on time when conditions are more ideal. That way, when an issue does come up, you have established a good track record with your instructor who is likely to take this into consideration.
9) Remember you started this journey for a reason. Obstacles may arise, but you can overcome them. Good luck!!

Student Spotlight: Rie Cosentino

Rie Cosentino is a second year student here at Ashford University. She is a 49 year old mother and grandmother who is passionate about social change. Rie began her academic journey long ago right out of high school in Upstate New York. However, with children, work, and life in general, higher education slipped by the wayside. In the interim years, Rie tried to finish her degree in various community colleges with little success. Finally, in 2007, she happened upon an ad on the internet for AU. The online format fit perfectly with her needs as a disabled person with the ability to set her own schedule and work from home. Rie was undecided about her major until last year. She chose Sociology because of her passion to help others and much personal experience with the issues involved it the field itself. She found that the courses required for her degree are consistently her favorite class. Rie likes that the courses are relevant to everyday life and helpful in understanding the world and the people in it.

Associate Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Rosemarie Anderson

Dr. Rosemarie Anderson is an associate faculty member at Ashford University. In her tenure here she has been able to integrate her passion for teaching with learners through the lens of SOC 120-Ethics and Social Responsibility.

Rosemarie has found that in Soc 120, each learner brings into the learning environment as expressed in their writings and discussions, ideas that are rooted in cultural traditions, gender, and race and class considerations.

Her resolve in teaching has been to show consistency where she starts out by responding to every introduction with a personal response acknowledging specific aspects of each learner's post. As a result of holding students to high standards, she finds that most start the course more inquisitive and to think more critically.

Teaching SOC120 is ideal for her because she is trained as a lawyer and thus the philosophical topics, which are addressed in Soc 120 interest her a great deal. Here, she brings previous experiences and teaching thru the lens of sociology, cultural studies, Critical Race Theory analysis.

These experiences enable Rosemarie to help students connect theory to practice by offering personal examples, which enrich the sociological content offering and insight into how one can approach looking at an ethical issue from both a philosophical as well as from a legal perspective.

Sociology Club Discussion: Solar Roads...

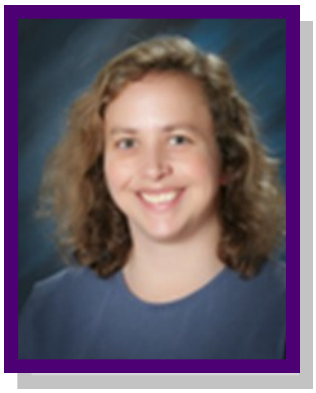
Recently in the Sociology Club on LinkedIn, our current club president, Ms. Jacquelyn (Jax) Petrovic, started a discussion about Solar Roads...Pipe dream or Path to Stability. The thought of solar roads is not a new idea but rather one that builds on already existing technology and is slowly gaining in momentum as recently, a company called Solar Roadways raised $1.8 million in crowd funding. Solar Roadways is interested in starting the transition of replacing all of America's roads, sidewalks and even bike lanes. They believe that in doing so "they could generate three times the energy the U.S uses in a year-while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75%" (Aziz, 2014). Jax starts off this discussion by noting that critics have been quick to point to costs and durability as issues that would make solar roadways unrealistic, that the sheer innovation and creativity of solar roads tends to jump-start her faith in the idea that real, tangible solutions to our energy woes are not too far away.

As the engineers, scientists, investors, and politicians begin to delve deeper into the feasibility of solar streets, many Americans will be watching closely to see if solar roadways are perhaps the light at the end of road in terms of our dependence on fossil fuels. What are your thoughts?

Associate Faculty Spotlight: Jennifer Moyer-Taylor

Ms. Jennifer Moyer-Taylor is an associate professor at Ashford University. She teaches classes in both sociology and psychology. Jennifer has been teaching for Ashford University since 2009. Teaching students to love learning and embrace their curiosity is a passion of hers. Jennifer is able to reach the diverse learner in her classroom because she knows students learn in a variety of ways, and she believes differentiating her instruction is important in order to reach all learners.

Jennifer earned a Master's in Social Work in 1994 at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri and has been working in the social work, community outreach, and school counseling field for almost 20 years. Jennifer currently works full-time as a school counselor in a K-8th grade school in Seattle, Washington. Jennifer has two children, Trinity and Marina. In her free time, she enjoys watching her oldest child play volleyball and her youngest do gymnastics. When the weather permits, she also enjoys riding her bike, hiking, and playing outdoors.



Ashford University is a vibrant community that offers effective learning online. Whether you pursue your education on line or in the traditional college experience, you'll find both infused with the same history of academic excellence.

References

American Sociological Association. (2013). Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity. Retrieved from: www.asanet.org/sections/altruism.cfm

Banach, Amanda (2014). How to Get a Job With a Sociology Degree. Retrieved from: http://work.chron.com/job-sociology-degree-18117.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2013a). Defining overweight and obesity. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/defining.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2013b). Obesity and overweight. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/overwt.htm

Greenwood, Beth (2014). Careers With the Mentally Disabled With a Sociology Degree. Retrieved from: http://work.chron.com/careers-mentally-disabled-sociology-degree-29430.html

Zevallos, Zuleyka (2014). What is applied Sociology. Retrieved from: http://sociologyatwork.org/about/what-is-applied-sociology/.

Image Source: Obesity Stock Photo. 2013. Stable URL: http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-107256155/stock-photo-obesity-in-word-collage.html?src=CmiBbo8iPx9ukzSBz16CpA-1-4

Image Source: youtube.com. 2014. Stable URL: https://www.youtube.com/user/sociologyatwork