Seasonal Social Changes

By Bill Martin, Chair

It has been a season of changes here in Binghamton this year: we have a new president, a new provost, a new interim dean, and a new chair as Ravi Palat soldiered off to a well-deserved leave.

It has also been a season of social change, and our students have been as passionate about social issues as in the past. When President Stenger recently met with protesting graduate students, he asked them what department they came from. The first three responded: “Sociology”!

Our graduate and undergraduate students have been active in other social movements as well, from the state-wide New York Student Rising movement to Occupy Wall Street.

Passion for social justice is more than matched by passion for research, and this issue focuses on the impressive research activities of graduate and undergraduate students.

GRADUATE RESEARCH

Graduate students are more heavily engaged in research than ever before, all over the world. Students are presenting their work at national and inter-national conferences, organizing panels and conferences on their own, and publishing their work. This spring graduate students organized their Third Graduate Student Conference, which drew participants from across the nation. A new drive to win research grants to support dissertation research is also bearing fruit. For a fuller list of graduate awards, research and publications see: www.binghamton.edu/sociology/

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

On the undergraduate front a whole host of innovations is providing coherence to an expanding research effort, from the first undergraduate sociology organization, through an expanded honors program and new undergraduate research projects.

In the last several years the department has made steady progress in rebuilding its undergraduate program. Majors have increased, a new honors program and junior/senior research seminars have been built, an undergraduate club has been formed, and a new undergraduate research program is being constructed. Kudos go to outgoing Director of Undergraduate Studies Fred Deyo and current DUS Gladys Jiménez-Muñoz.

UNDERGRADUATE CLUB

March 15, 2012 was the first meeting of the Undergraduate Sociology Club. Nouha Saeed was elected president.
2012 Honors Graduates Speak

Maggie Ward
“Your too progressive NOT to be in sociology. You need to switch majors.” Professor Juanita Diaz said to me as we paid for our dinner at a nearby Panera.

Within hours, literally, right after the dinner, I was passing out petitions protesting cuts to public higher education. I quickly realized that it was this level of education, of connection, of challenge I had been seeking from college. I was never short of a challenge. I’ll never forget, one day after class, then graduate student Matt Birkhold threw up his arms and said to me, “at one point, you’re gonna have to do more than get signatures on a petition!” Taken aback by his booming voice, I was stunned. “You gotta always think ahead—what’s your next step?”

The next step for me, in class and outside of class, was challenging myself. I broke the typical relationship prototypes of professor—student, teacher’s assistant—undergrad. I sought out the brightest, and forced myself to start thinking, talking, even acting like them. The open doors in the Library Tower made this process easy and fun.

By the time senior year snuck up, my professors had passed along to me some really awesome opportunities. I switched places with them, if just for a moment, when I presented to an audience of graduate students and professors, at the sociology graduate student’s World Historical Social Science Conference.

Most notably, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Kelvin Santiago-Vallences on what would be a 60 page honors thesis titled “The Struggle for North Africa’s Future: ‘Youth’ Action Amidst Neoliberal Development.” His hours of time, along with the efforts of Professor Deyo and Professor Martin, helped me engage in a level of analysis the department prides itself on. It was this research that helped me, right after graduation, secure work for a nonprofit organization.

Emily Patka
Writing my thesis on “Finding New Words for Old Struggles: The Emergence of the Zapatista Movement” was definitely a learning experience. I started out feeling very confident that I would have no problem figuring out what I wanted to write about and how I wanted to organize it. As I started to get into the process, I realized how big of a project it was, and the infinite number of things I could focus on, even within one subject area. Halfway through the fall semester I radically changed what I wanted to write about; I decided to work on the Zapatistas, whom I have been interested in for a long time and from whom I learned a lot when I went on a study abroad to Chiapas in June of 2011. I focused on their development starting with a precursor organization that was formed in the 1960s up to their 1994 uprising when they became public, as that is not often discussed. I learned a lot about the history of the Zapatistas while writing this thesis, but I learned even more about the process of independent research, and how challenging it is to give yourself the structure and discipline necessary to create a coherent and engaging final product. I am happy with the final result, and am grateful for all the faculty support I had while working on this project, mostly my advisor, Professor Deyo, and my secondary reader, Professor West.

Alyssa Starrantino
My experience writing my Sociology honors thesis on “An Alternative to Foster Care?: Residential Education and Student Outcomes” was one of the best opportunities I took advantage of during my education at Binghamton University. My study allowed me a significant amount of creative direction, which was a dream come true. My committee, especially my advisors Professor Frederic Deyo and Professor Gladys Jimenez-Munoz, were extremely supportive and aided me in overcoming the challenge of learning how a social sciences thesis should be constructed. The experience helped me improve my research skills, writing ability, and communication skills- the last by interviewing professors around the country, and even Skyping the founder of the United States’ residential education program across the world! Writing my thesis has opened more doors for me, including aiding in preparation for a graduate-level education in the fall and creating further opportunities to engage in my thesis research.

SUPPORT UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Undergraduate research takes support—funds for research materials, travel, interviewing, etc. To support students’ efforts, you can donate to our Undergraduate Research Fund by contacting: Denise Spadine at dspadine@binghamton.edu
Graduate Profile:
Brian Zbriger
2012 Fulbrighter

As an undergraduate student at University of Massachusetts at Amherst some 10 years ago, I began to hear from professors about the unique sociology program at Binghamton University. When I went on to the University of Massachusetts at Lowell to do Master's level work in Regional Economic and Social Development, the reading assignments included exciting work by Binghamton graduates like Philip McMichael and Beverly Silver. When I finally came to visit Binghamton to meet current faculty and students, I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of this remarkable intellectual community.

My main areas of interest are labor, migration and global development. Although my previous research has looked at Latin America, I have become increasingly focused on examining the impacts of the global boom in oil palm production. This summer I will be in Malang, Indonesia on a Critical Language Scholarship from the US Department of State. In the coming academic year I will be conducting dissertation research in Malaysia supported by Fulbright.

This trip will also involve an important milestone in my personal life. In September I will be married in Malaysia to Yamoi Pham, also a current Binghamton PhD student.

RECENT GRADUATE GRANTS

2012 Matt Birkhold
Davis-Putter Scholarship

2012 Anders Bjornberg
Critical Language Scholarship for Bangla/Bengali – U.S. Department of State

2011-2012 Yu-ling Huang
Dissertation Fellowship, Chiang Ching-Kwo Foundation, 2012-13 (Declined)
Dissertation Fellowship, D. Kim Foundation, 2012-13

Fellowship for Doctoral Candidates in Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, 2011-12
Research Grant, Friends of the Princeton University Library, 2011-12

2011 Latoya Lee
Critical Language Scholarship, India – U.S. Department of State

2011 Dellvin Williams
Critical Language Scholarship, Jordan – U.S. Department of State

2012 Brian Zbriger
Critical Language Scholarship for Indonesian – U.S. Department of State
Fulbright Academic Grant, Malaysia

TKH FUND
SUPPORT GRADUATE RESEARCH

Established in the memory of Terence K. Hopkins, the beloved founder of the graduate program, the TKH Fund supports graduate student research and travel—a critical component of developing young scholars. You can donate to the fund by contacting Denise Spadine at dspadine@binghamton.edu.
On April 13-15, 2012 the Sociology Graduate Student Organization held their third biennial conference. Vijay Prashad was the keynote speaker, with presentations following from students across the region and nation. The program included:

**FRIDAY**

Keynote Speaker: Vijay Prashad

*Dream History of the Global South*

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**SATURDAY**

**Shifting Contours of American Power**

Brendan McQuade (SUNY Binghamton), The New Militarized Policing in a World-Historical Perspective

James Parisot (SUNY Binghamton), American Empire and Emerging Powers: Theory and History

Ethan Warren (SUNY Binghamton), War, the Public, and Control: from Vietnam to Iraq

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**Historical Capitalism, Empire, and Law**

Ryan Mead (SUNY Binghamton), Van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* as Indicative of the Transformation From Feudalism to Capitalism

Yamoi Pham (SUNY Binghamton), Nation and Empire: Dichotomous or Complementary?

Vanessa Miceli (York University), A Restless Pursuit of Stability: New Histories of the Modern Dynamic in English Property Law

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**Commodities, Geographies, and Immigration**

Anders Bjornberg (SUNY Binghamton), Developing Marginality: Jute as an Intermediary Commodity

Babyrani Yumnam (SUNY Binghamton), Colonialism and Spaces of Uneven Development in Northeast India: A Historical Inquiry

Jackie Hayes (SUNY Albany), The Rise of the “New” Sweatshop: How Immigration Law is Shaping the U.S. Workplace

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**SUNDAY**

**Neoliberalism and Gender in Mexico**

Courtney Franz, Myra Thomas, Marissa Luck (The Evergreen State College), Gendered (Re)production and the Neoliberal Regime: Woman's Labor in Mexico 1982-2000.

**Political Economy: Output, Money, and Development**

Ellis Schrafenaker (The New School), The Narrow Measure Value-Added of U.S. Output: An Examination of Cycles

Thomas Herndon (Umass Amherst), Marx, Graeber, and Money

Melih Yesilbag (SUNY Binghamton), A Critique of the Neoclassic and Statist Approaches in the Political Economy of Development: Bringing Class Struggle Back In

**Capital, Markets, and Social Classification**

Evrim Engin (SUNY Binghamton), Finance Capital and the Militarization of Time

Samantha Fox (SUNY Binghamton), Local Agricultural Markets as Locations of Ex-Corporation in Upstate New York

James Armel Smith (SUNY Binghamton), Social Classification and the Embodied ‘Human’

**Capitalism and its Alternatives**

Colin Donnaruma and Nicholas Partyka (SUNY Albany), Challenging the Presumption in Favor of Markets: Exploring Democratic Alternatives

Eric Windingland (SUNY Binghamton), Now We See the Violence Inherent in the System

Josh Gathany (SUNY Binghamton), History and the Principle of Explosion
Public Sociology by Graduate Students, A Report

By Brendan McQuade, GSEU

Students in the sociology department have been especially active in politics this year. While many students have taken trips down to New York City to take part in Occupy Wall Street protests and general assembly, more organized activity centered on the student movement and graduate student labor campaigns happening on campus.

A group of grads and undergrads from the sociology department form a core of the Binghamton chapter of New York Students Rising. NYSR is a statewide network of students and campus-organizations dedicated to defending public higher education in the face of austerity budgets and privatization schemes.

NYSR organized a state-wide walk out on October 5 2011, when 400 Binghamton University students walked out in protest of the multi-faceted attack on public education.

On March 5 2012, sociology students led 100 Binghamton University students to Albany join hundreds of students from other SUNY and CUNY campuses to take over the state capitol for the day, disrupt the senate proceedings and put pressure on key members of the NY State

assembly. The day culminated with 32 arrests outside of Governor Cuomo’s office, after the governor refused to come out and speak with the students.

In addition to these coordinated state wide efforts, NYSR has organized multiple events on the campus level including teach-ins on privatization, neoliberalism, labor issues on campus.

By the end of the spring semester, NYSR organized a broad coalition of student groups into a Progressive Student Union. This multiracial group of grads and undergrads ended the semester with a two hour meeting with Binghamton University’s new president, Harvey Stenger.

The PSU pressured Stenger to abandon his support for privatization and challenged the president to increase Binghamton University levels of minority students to at least represent the diversity of New York State. In addition to the work of NYSR, graduate students in the sociology department have been especially active in the Graduate Student Employees Union. Pressing the administration of the issue of administrator compensation and graduate student support, GSEU members have rallied outside President Stenger’s inaugural press conference and marched on May Day for cost of living wages.

The May Day march ended with a brief occupation of the Cooper Administration building, which drew President Stenger down to address the group of students from sociology, history, comp lit, physics, and chemistry.

Following the May Day march, President Stenger attended the GSEU’s next labor-management meeting and promised union officials that the administration would budget “hundreds of thousands” to graduate student support for the 2013-2014 budget.
Department News
Please let us know your news that can be included in future issues of our newsletter. We would love to hear from you. Contact us at Sociology@binghamton.edu

Attention Alumni
Please contact us with your current contact details as we would like to keep updated alumni lists to email you our newsletters. Please let us know if you do not want us to share your information. Please also let us know about your jobs, books, births, partnerships, and any other information you want to share with the alumni network.

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