

The Sociology and Anthropology
Department of
MUHLENBERG

COLLEGE

presents

The 6th Annual
Senior Research Symposium



Wednesday, May 5th 2010

*The Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Welcomes You!*

Dr. Janine Chi, Associate Professor of Sociology & Chair

Dr. William Abruzzi, Associate Professor of Anthropology


Dr. J. Christopher Kovats-Bernat, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Dr. Anne Esacove, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Dr. Aaron Passell, Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology

Dr. Lana Williams, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

Ms. Tracy Kline, Department Secretary



Schedule of Speakers

Introductory Remarks

Dr. Anne Esacove

Parental Rationality And the Immunization Debate

Thomas Bertorelli

Too Expensive for My Taste: Music Downloaders in a Cultural Hierarchy

Michael Kurtz

Vampires and the Women Who Love Them: Gender and Sexuality in the 'Twilight' Series

Sophy Saunders-Pappentick

"Giving a Crap:" Influences on Student Involvement in Diversity Programming

Anna Stressenger

Tops, Bottoms, and Heteronormativity: Women's Un- derstandings of Sexual Experiences

Caryn Viverito

Concluding Remarks

Dr. Anne Esacove

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Welcome to the Sixth Annual Senior Symposium in Sociology and Anthropology.

The five seniors who are presenting today have worked diligently this semester preparing their research. Throughout the term, we have focused on the *process* of research rather than the product of the research. In doing so, the students have learned how to address a wide-range of issues that invariably arise when conducting research. They supported each other with advice, constructive critique and enthusiastic encouragement. Today they have the opportunity to share a summary of what they have learned during the course of their projects.

With a spirit of collegiality that represents this group, Anna, Caryn, Michael, Sophy and Thomas offer the following advice to juniors considering taking Senior Seminar next year:

I first learned about senior seminar during my sophomore year of college when I watched the seniors at the time present their research at senior symposium. I knew then that I would do senior seminar because it is the highest feat that I could achieve within this major that I love so much. Of course, all good things come with a price, and I have found that doing this research is the hardest, most grueling thing I have ever done academically. It has tested me both intellectually and personally, and I would do it all over again because it has forced me to grow in immeasurable ways. I have gained from this experience a depth of knowledge about a pertinent issue that has vexed me for years, I have had the privilege of working closely with faculty that I deeply admire, and I have gained a first-hand understanding of what it is like to do sociological research. With all the inevitable difficulties and setbacks, doing this research has given me greater confidence in myself both intellectually and personally, and has left me with a much more informed perspective on my future aspirations.

Taking senior seminar was definitely one of the best choices I've made during my Muhlenberg career. Although it is challenging, it's also very exciting. Not only are you able to pursue a research topic that you are interested in, but you have free reign on the design of the study! I have gained valuable research skills that will help with graduate work and organizational skills that will last me a lifetime. The process is difficult but as soon as you start seeing results of all the hard work put into something you truly care about, it is quite a rewarding experience. I feel so much more confident in my abilities as a researcher in I am well-prepared for whatever comes next. I would recommend taking the class to anyone who is dedicated to conducting their own research and willing to work hard; it's a great way to end senior year!



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My research project is truly a culmination of my experiences here at Muhlenberg College. As an in-class sociologist and out-of-class musician, my most passionate interests converged in my choice to explore the social configuration of the digital music marketplace. The early days of my research were filled with a strange combination of excitement and uncertainty. I looked at past literature wondering, "Do I really have anything important to say?" Yet in the process of reading, analyzing and writing, I found myself solving new problems and making new connections that I would never before have imagined. Now that I see how far my thinking has come, I realize that I have really accomplished something awesome. This was the most challenging, time consuming, sleep-depriving work that I have ever undertaken, and I loved it.

I was interested in taking Senior Seminar because it allowed me to explore a problem I'd been interested in since I began taking Sociology courses, but had not been able to examine in any of the classes I had taken. Not only have I been able to do that, but the experience of sharing research with a small group of like-minded and enthusiastic students has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my time at Muhlenberg. It is certainly a difficult task to take on, but it is also completely worth it, and I cannot recommend it highly enough! Senior Seminar was a challenging but wonderful way to cap off my time here at Muhlenberg. Good luck to 2011!

When I first decided to take Senior Seminar, I was very excited at the prospect of spending more time with and extending a question that I had identified when I first took Introduction to Sociology. However, when the proverbial honeymoon period was over, I was smacked in the face with the most challenging experience of my Muhlenberg career. Pushing me to apply and make use of what I had learned over the years in novel contexts, this course was intellectually demanding in ways that I hadn't experienced before. Along the same vein, this course was also the most gratifying experience in my four years. Forcing me to take confidence in my work, I am the proud owner of my research with the knowledge to prove it. Looking back, I can only think that Senior Seminar was the most appropriate way to top off my senior year. Congratulations to all, and good luck to those who will follow!

The department is proud of these students. We are happy to be able to offer this opportunity for the students to share what they have learned in this senior capstone experience with their classmates, friends and family. Thank you for supporting them.

Best of luck seniors!
Anne Esacove



Mr. Thomas Bertorelli



Hometown: Great Neck, NY

A Neuroscience and Music double-major, Thomas would like to thank his fellow classmates for pushing him to think about issues in new ways and integrate lessons from various classes in the process.

Thomas is also a pianist.

Parental Rationality And the Immunization Debate

Within the past couple of years, many popular news sources have reported on the debate currently taking place over vaccine safety. While celebrities have given a face to the movement, most of the anti-vaccination sentiment has been attributed to parents worried about negative side effects resulting from vaccine administration. Citing studies released by the scientific community that disprove correlations between specific vaccines and any detrimental effects, popular sources make the claim that non-immunizing parents are unintelligent, irrational, misinformed, and bad parents. This research proposes that contrary to popular belief, parents are informed decision makers who put a high value on the rationality behind their decisions. Representing a challenge to health policy, this study also highlights how parental decisions can be understood as configured by the forces captured in the theories of popular epidemiology, medicalization, and momism.



Mr. Michael Kurtz



Hometown: Toms River, NJ

A Sociology major and Music minor, Mike plays in the synth-rock band TV Babysitter, which went on tour last December and took the East Coast by storm.

Too Expensive for My Taste: Music Downloaders in a Cultural Hierarchy

Through interview-based research, this study explores the reasons for which some consumers have continued to acquire music using free file exchange services, while others have embraced digital retailers. This research identifies the ways in which college students make logical and moral sense of their own behavior in the context of recent changes relating to the digital landscape and the art world. I find that, in contrast to common arguments, the decision to purchase or freely download music is not based solely on economic incentives and disincentives, but is informed by the cultural disposition of consumers to certain musical tastes, knowledges, values and beliefs. Through such a focus on cultural dispositions, this research helps explain why free downloading has eluded eradication efforts and continues to be a widely popular and celebrated form of music consumption.



Ms. Sophy Saunders-Pappentick



Hometown: Philadelphia, PA

Sophy is an English major and Sociology minor and a proud new dog mom.

Vampires and the Women Who Love Them: Gender and Sexuality in the 'Twilight' Series

Stephenie Meyer's 'Twilight' series has led to a rise in popularity of the "new" vampire. In fact, an analysis of the series reveals that Meyer's vampires and the women who love them are, rather, representative of a familiar and oppressive understanding of gender and sexuality that has been repackaged and sold as a romantic ideal. I focus particularly on the representation and performance of gender of women in the books, both supernatural and human, drawing from West and Zimmerman (1987).



Ms. Anna Stressenger



Hometown: Cape Elizabeth, ME

A Sociology major, Anna has a concentration in Studio Art and is a member of the executive board of the Muhlenberg GSA. She also conducted independent research regarding export-agriculture while studying abroad in Argentina through the School for International Training (SIT). While in Argentina, she also participated in the Buenos Aries Pride March. She also enjoys birding, fishing, biking, hiking,

“Giving a Crap:” Influences on Student Involvement in Diversity Programming

Through survey and interview data, I investigate the factors that motivate student involvement in diversity-related co-curricular programming on Muhlenberg College's campus. Contrary to existing research about the relationship between diversity courses and “democratic outcomes,” (social/civic action engagement) I find that the courses labeled with a “D” diversity credit at Muhlenberg are not correlated with student involvement. However, other courses not labeled for “D” credit that students believe are related to diversity are correlated with, and can have an affect on, involvement. They often provide a vocabulary for interpreting and discussing diversity in such a way that students feel that they have the discursive and substantive tools to access many of the diversity-related conversations on campus. Still, diversity-related courses are not the sole contributor to involvement. They work in conjunction with other non-academic motivators towards involvement, including social networks, a want to add to existing perspectives, a sense of belonging with and exclusion from the multiple identity-based campus communities, and students perceived roles, responsibility, and place within in “diversity.” This research points to new, and potentially more effective, strategies to teaching diversity and encouraging students towards democratic engagement. This research can help inform Muhlenberg College and other collegiate institutions in reaching their intended goals for teaching diversity.



Ms. Caryn Viverito



Hometown: South Brunswick, NJ

Caryn is a Sociology and Psychology double major.

After graduation, Caryn plans on teaching English in Spain.

Tops, Bottoms, and Heteronormativity: Women's Understandings of Sexual Experiences

According to past literature, heterosexual women report disproportionately fewer instances of achieving orgasm, knowledge about the clitoral orgasm, and place less importance on their orgasm than lesbian women. Interviews with Muhlenberg College students are used in order to investigate how heteronormativity influences such sexual experiences among students of different sexual orientations. Gayle Rubin and Chrys Ingraham's theories of heteronormativity are applied to explain and analyze the findings.



The Senior Seminar Class



From left to right: Michael Kurtz, Anna Stressenger, Sophy Saunders-Pappentick, Caryn Viverito, and Thomas Bertorelli



Special Thanks to:

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Chris Maher

Amanda McGovern

Dr. Janine Chi,
Associate Professor of Sociology & Department Chair

Tracy Kline, Department Secretary



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