

SOCIOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Union College, NY

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

Chair's Update - 1
Course Spotlight - 3
Faculty Updates. - 4
Spring Courses - 7



NEWSLETTER STAFF 2021

Faculty Advisors:

David Cotter
Melinda Goldner

Editor-in-Chief:

Peter Dranow '21

Contributing Writers:

Maeve Daby '23
Dhara Shukla '22
Karson Saunders '23

SOCIOLOGY CHAIR'S UPDATE

From Professor Cotter (Interim Sociology Dept. Chair):

Here we are at the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. Unprecedented is probably a good way to say what this year has been like. It's also been a fruitful and fortuitous year to be exercising the sociological imagination. Whether it's the disruptions of the pandemic—both personal and global, the mobilizations around racial justice, the upheaval and uncertainty of a disputed election, or any of the other “private troubles” and “public issues” that have marked this year, it has certainly been one unlike any in my career at Union.

Continued on Page 2

CHAIR'S UPDATE CONT.

That being said, I have seen ways in which our students and faculty have not only persisted but thrived.

I had the chance to advise several theses and read several more, all of which showed me just how talented, determined, and well prepared our students are. The same can be said for our faculty. My conversations with many of them have shown just how they have adapted to the weird world of online, hybrid, and distanced teaching. None of it has been easy, but we've really seen some innovative adaptations to an unforeseen situation. I think the Sociology Club, which has adapted to online and virtual activities really well, also deserves a special shout-out. Their efforts at clothing and book drives this year have been commendable.

For our graduates, I wish you the best of luck. I know that your Union education and sociological preparation has made you ready for anything that life throws at you. I hope that you'll take the time once in a while to reach out and let us know what you've been doing.

To those of you who will be back next fall, I can't wait to see you for in-person classes where we'll be able to engage in the kinds of face-to-face learning that we know and miss so much. I know that we've all got things that we really missed about normal interactions, but for me, it's been the chance meetings on campus that result in long conversations over a cup of coffee or even just a short chat on the sidewalk.



SPRING COURSE HIGHLIGHT: AGING AND SOCIETY (SOC-206)

By: *Karson Saunders*

Offered this spring by Professor Patterson, Aging and Society (SOC-206) provided instruction on applications of both sociological and gerontological perspectives on aging. Students in Professor Patterson's course explored the social determinants of health alongside demographic patterns and historical factors to better understand and hone their awareness of the ways in which aging uniquely impacts disadvantaged populations in our society. The course addressed a variety of topics, including considerations of aging in the U.S. compared with other countries/cultures, the social, physical, and cognitive consequences of age, and the management of chronic diseases in old age and the state of policies, programs, and protections for the elderly.

The goal of this course was to provide students with not only a better understanding of the multi-faceted concept of aging—both in terms of biological and sociological factors—but also to develop an awareness of relevant policies/political issues and the global imperative to improve how we the elderly are cared for. This is especially true given the enormous population of the baby boomer cohort, which will undoubtedly challenge current and inadequate systems in place.

For the course's midterm and final papers, students were asked to explore multiple perspectives within our healthcare system and not only consider the experience of aging individuals but also insurance companies and other key stakeholders in eldercare. Ultimately, this assignment allowed students to broaden their own understanding of the U.S. healthcare system, its problems, and pathways to positive change for the future.

SPRING 2021 FACULTY UPDATES

By: Maeve Daby

Professor Ilene M. Kaplan, Joseph C. Driscoll Professor of Sociology and Marine Policy

Throughout the Spring term, Professor Kaplan continued her work reviewing marine and fishery policies, attending virtual fishery workshops and meetings, and review research proposals by the U.S Office of Sea Grants. In addition to this, Professor Kaplan continued to support Union students in finding remote internships in the Capital Region. While the internships have largely been with organizations whose work surrounds sociological and environmental concerns, this Spring, students were also given the opportunity to work with organizations addressing family violence, the ongoing toll taken by COVID-19, and other issues in the local community. Lastly, Professor Kaplan enjoyed viewing presentations from a number of her senior thesis students at this year's Steinmetz Undergraduate Research Honors Consortium.

Professor Timothy Stablein

This spring, Professor Stablein taught three remote courses: Social Constructions of Deviance, America's War on Drugs, and a new course offered through the Minerva's Online Program, Conspiracy Theories and their Defenders. While each was somewhat related in terms of content, Professor Stablein reports each having been designed to challenge students by touching on a variety of different topics. While all three courses were remote, each was offered in a synchronous format and was said to have sparked engaging conversations between students, despite the inherent challenges that come with teaching in a virtual space. That being said, Professor Stablein cannot wait to get back on campus to see and teach students in-person this fall. This summer he is looking forward to some much-needed rest, however, also plans to continue work on a few academic papers.

Professor Melinda Goldner

Professor Goldner is currently on sabbatical continuing her research on health activism. She has two strands of research that examine the linkages between the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) movements, as well as the women's health movement. As part of Professor Goldner's research, she will be interviewing female alternative medicine practitioners. These interviews will focus on how CAM professions, for example, acupuncture, are gendered and why some CAM practitioners specialize in women's health. Professor Goldner will additionally be looking at how social factors such as race, ethnicity, and income affect CAM usage and will continue this work throughout the summer and next fall. Although she really enjoyed teaching in a variety of hybrid formats this year, Professor Goldner is hoping for a return to in-person classes when she returns next winter.

FACULTY UPDATES CONT.

Professor David Cotter, Interim Department Chair

This spring I've been teaching a section of Introduction to Sociology. It's an in-person course (so now I've taught online, hybrid, and in-person this year). It's not quite face-to-face in that the students are all more or less locked into a single seat, several seats away from each other. That precludes a lot of the normal in-class activities that I've usually used in my classes. So, lots of lectures combined with big class discussions (a little hard with 30 students in the room but we make do). As an illustration of using the sociological imagination, the first book we read was Nicholas Christakis' *Apollo's Arrow* which chronicles the significant effects that pandemics (COVID-19 and prior pandemics) have on human societies. The students in the class wrote participant observation papers on what college is like under COVID. They were really interesting to read and may provide documentation for people who are looking back at what things were like on campus this year.

I've also been working with colleagues from Skidmore and St. Lawrence on a project looking at how faculty have fared in the pandemic. So far we've presented three papers and published one showing that the pandemic has led to elevated stress and depression, and decreased sleep and research productivity. Those effects are worse for faculty earlier in their careers, parents, women, and BIPOC faculty. We're about to launch a second wave of surveys to examine the depth and persistence of these effects. In addition to that research this summer, I'll be working with Alyssa Harrynanan as a Kelley ADK Fellow to investigate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the Adirondacks. At the end of the summer, I'll help to facilitate the Adirondack Mini-term. I also hope to do some camping and hiking and a bit more work on my barn foundation this summer. The days are just packed.

Professor Deidre Hill-Butler

Professor Deidre Hill-Butler is looking forward to returning to in-person teaching this fall, as well as the return of her course *Sociology of the Family: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. As a part of this course, students will examine not only the sociology of families generally but also their own families and the degree to which social mobility has played a role in their lives. While Professor Hill-Butler is excited for the sense of normal that teaching in person will bring, she is hesitant about our society's wider rush to get back to normal. Although the pandemic has taken an enormous toll on the country—and especially marginalized populations therein—it has shaken things up and provided an opportunity for positive change. Much of Professor Hill-Butler's work this Spring—both inside the classroom and out—has revolved around this opportunity and advocating for a more compassionate, equal, and just “normal” going forward.

FACULTY UPDATES CONT.

Professor Rosemary Patterson

This summer Professor Patterson is hoping to submit her application to Tulane's IRB and become approved to begin collecting data in the fall for her study, "Perinatal Anxiety Detection and Perceived Social Support from Medical Providers." The purpose of Professor Patterson's study is to explore perinatal women's perceived levels of social support from medical providers, and the impact of perceived social support on perinatal anxiety detection. The study is a pre-experimental one-group post-test design. Specifically, there will be one group of participants who have been introduced to a stimulus (perinatal medical care) and there will be a post-test (online questionnaire) to retrospectively assess perceived levels of social support from their medical provider during the perinatal period. Participants will complete a modified version of the multidimensional perceived social support questionnaire afterward.

Professor Patterson has also continued drafting a paper regarding the unintended consequences of the Hospital Readmission Reduction Program (HRRP), preparing for courses next fall, and working with the Sociology Club to host events in support of the local community. This past term, Professor Patterson was invited to be the keynote speaker at events hosted by Union's Women Union for Denim Day and Take Back the Night. While it has undoubtedly been a challenging year, Professor Patterson is in awe of the resilience among Union's students, grateful to have joined the campus community, and excited for whatever the future may hold!



COURSE OFFERINGS FOR FALL 2021

SOC-100-01	Intro to Sociology	TTH 1:55PM 3:40PM
SOC-100-02	Intro to Sociology	MWF 9:15AM-10:20AM
SOC-202-01	Social Problems & Policy	T 9:00AM-12:40PM
SOC 205-01	Social Work & Human Services	MWF 1:50PM-2:55PM
SOC-212-01	Amer. Fam. in Cross Cult.Perspectives	TTH 9:00AM-10:45AM
SOC-262-01	Juvenile Delinquency	TTH 9:00AM-10:45AM
SOC-300-01	Quantitative Social Research	MWF 8:00AM-9:05AM
SOC-359-01	Environmental Policy/Management	TBA



Have a Great Summer!