That’s a First!
Joaquin Balaguer: Magician of Dominican Politics?
Reported by Briana Stetler ’13

Last November, the Sociology Department hosted its first Theme Dinner with Professor Emelio Betances as the featured speaker. Joaquin Balaguer, one of the most important figures in Dominican Republic politics in the past century, was the focus. As students and professors gathered to listen to Professor Betances’ lecture, they enjoyed some delicious traditional food from the Dominican Republic.

Although he began his political career working for the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961), Balaguer served as president of the nation seven times. Subsequently, he continued to influence Dominican politics behind the scenes as president of his Reformist Party. Professor Betances wondered: was Balaguer, as some have claimed, a magician of Dominican politics or, rather, was his career a product of the social and political circumstances of his time (the aftermath of Trujillo’s bloody dictatorship and subsequent US military intervention in 1965)?

Professor Betances argued that Balaguer was the product of Dominican history, not a magician. As a sociologist, I am sure you can understand why Professor Betances preferred the option that placed Balaguer as an authoritarian figure who both influenced and was influenced by his social and historical context. Betances gave two examples to illustrate the importance of socio-economic context to explain the rise of Balaguer’s leadership. First, Balaguer grew up in an authoritarian society and this affected the style with which he governed his country. Authoritarianism also affected his view of himself; Professor Betances argues that Balaguer saw himself as holding such a high position that he was above the law—causing gross human rights violations to occur throughout his twelve years in power (1966-1978). Second, The U.S. intervention was of paramount importance to explain Balaguer’s rise to power. Actually, the U.S. presence in the country helped him “win” the elections of 1966 and, subsequent American investment helped stabilize the economy.

Munching away on very tasty “sancocho,” a soup made up of vegetables and tropical roots mixed with chicken, Professor Betances’ talk was a remarkable start to the Sociology Department’s Themed Dinners. His talk provided us with a fascinating combination of sociological and historical insights. It was obvious that Professor Betances has done thorough research on this topic and he shared it with passion. Be on the lookout for the next Themed Dinner!

Soc Department Celebrates Chinese New Year
Reported by Chandra Kirkland ’13

Students and professors from the Sociology Department met in Glattfelder Lodge on Tuesday, February 12th, to celebrate the Chinese New Year with Chinese food and a presentation by senior Joe Miller ’13. The mood was casual and cheerful as participants lined up to fill their plates with the wide array of food choices. One or two professors settled at each table, striking up conversations with their students about classes, travel, and the changes in the Sociology Department’s location (West Building, here we come). The presentation following the meal was relaxed – Joe
went into some detail about his research in Singapore, flipping through a Prezi presentation. He explained his study of the Haw Par Villa amusement park, as well as standardized testing and the Singaporean education system, and then the floor was opened for discussion and questions. To conclude the evening celebration, Professor Phua (department chair) handed out beautifully decorated paper bags filled with candy (and 2 cards for free sociology t-shirts!). He explained that, traditionally, these paper bags are given by elders to the younger, unmarried generation. This seems fitting for the occasion; students and professors gathered in Glatfelter Lodge to celebrate the Chinese New Year, but they were also celebrating education and the sharing of knowledge, good cheer and delicious food between students and professors.

**Student Led Discussions**

**The Thoroughly Contrived Character Performed by a Confident Man**

**Reported by Miranda Wisor**

Thursday, February 28th, Chad MacLeod ‘14 presented a lunchtime Sociological discussion in Glatfelter Lodge titled, “The Thoroughly Contrived Character Performed by a Confident Man.” The discussion focused on the presentation of self as described by Erving Goffman’s study of human behavior in social situations influenced by other’s perceived interpretation. MacLeod explained as an intro to his discussion that when Professor Phua first approached him about presenting for the department, he knew that he wanted to focus on media and current events. He quickly realized that media coverage of Lance Armstrong’s admission to doping fit perfectly in Goffman’s theatrical framework of presentation of self, impression management, and stigma.

MacLeod outlined the three definitions of self that Armstrong presented prior to his admission of using performance enhancing drugs: 1. The Cancer Survivor, 2. King of Cycling, and 3. LIVESTRONG/philanthropist. For decades, Armstrong successfully managed this presentation of self despite criticism and the audience (general public) accepted his presentation. As Goffman warned was possible, discrediting information was revealed and Armstrong was forced to take action in an attempt to regain credibility.

The seeking of regained credibility became the primary focus of discussion following MacLeod’s presentation. Was Armstrong’s presentation of self sincere or cynical when he sat down to be interviewed by Oprah in January? Is Armstrong ultimately to blame for the insincere impression presented by him and other cyclists; or is he a scapegoat? Will the audience accept his attempt to regain credibility and if so, on what basis? A lively discussion followed; fueled by faculty and students in attendance addressing many of the social impacts of similar media examples.

**Feminist Frat Boys**

**Reported by Miranda Wisor**

In the Constitution Lot trailers on Thursday, April 4th, Katie Ragon ‘13 presented the second in a series of lunchtime Sociological discussions presented by the Sociology Department. Her presentation, titled, “Feminist Frat Boys,” focused on masculine norms and sexual assault prevention on American college campuses. Ragon presented research which showed that the frequency of sexual assaults on campuses may be understood using the Social Norms Theory offered by Perkins and Berkowitz (1986). She explained that individuals may believe that such assaults occur more commonly among their peers than what occurs in reality; therefore the perceived norm influences the action of individuals rather than actual norms. Ragon presented that such misconceptions of social norms appear highest among members of Greek life.

Following her presentation, Ragon led a lively discussion among students and faculty about preventative measures that have been or can be instituted at Gettysburg College to work to prevent sexual assault. Some measures growing in popularity such as the “Not on our Campus” movement among some fraternities provide an excessively gendered approach to assault prevention with the implication that women require men to protect them. Other difficulties involved in the definition, education, and reporting of sexual assault were also discussed.

> Is there a sociological theory that really fascinates you? Or a current event you’d love to analyze sociologically? If you are interested in facilitating your own Sociological Discussion, talk to Professor Phua!
Eastern Sociological Society  
Reported by Kelsey Boyce ‘13

The Gettysburg College Sociology Department sent nine students to present at the prestigious Eastern Sociology Conference in Boston from March 21 through March 24. Seniors Joe Miller ‘13, Kelsey Boyce ‘13, Margaret Weisman ‘13, Allie Serina ‘13, Katie Ragon ‘13, Briana Stetler ‘13 and Brittany Jobes ‘13, and Sophomores Kate Higgins ‘15 and Yisbely Alevante ‘15 presented their original research at the conference. These nine students took part in a conference that featured professors, graduate students and undergraduates and their work in the field of Sociology.

This year’s conference theme was Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Lives, Social Change, Social Action and Social Justice and it encompassed a wide range of presentations. The Gettysburg students presented on topics that ranged from time management, intellectual disability, gender and sexuality, to corporal punishment.

The format of the presentations varied, with some students presenting in poster sessions while others presented at round table or paper discussions. The conference offered many opportunities to collaborate with other Sociologists with experience in a variety of fields.

“It was inspiring being around so many professionals who are passionate about sociology,” said Weisman. “When I explain my research to friends, I can see their eyes starting to close after I get through one sentence. However, at ESS, it was so great having not only sociologists, but also other undergraduate students actually take an interest in my work.”

Jobes “really enjoyed being able to learn about topics that aren't offered through our sociology department while at the conference.” The conference also offered an opportunity for the Gettysburg students to collaborate with each other and appreciate other research occurring on campus, as well as an opportunity to get to know some fellow majors.

“It was great to have the support of other Gettysburg College [Sociology] majors and discuss my research with people who have similar interests,” said Serina.

Ragon echoed this statement, “We had an awesome group of students attend and it made me very proud to say I was from Gettysburg College and thus associate myself with everyone else on the trip.” In addition, presenting at the conference provides a learning experience for all and allows students to better appreciate the value of Gettysburg College’s education. According to Alevante, “It was an amazing experience! I was able to challenge myself, and step out of my comfort zone in presenting my research with those who I have never met!”

To her surprise and delight, Stetler was mistaken for a PhD student at the roundtable where she presented her research.

Joe Miller has attended the ESS conferences for the past three years and because of his experiences, plans to help make sure that the tradition continues. “In all honesty, attending the conference this year and the past two has led to me making a personal commitment that I’ll donate $100 to the department for research-related activities, hopefully as early as next year,” said Miller. “I want to provide others with the same opportunities which I was fortunate enough to receive during my time here.”

All participants wanted to thank the Provost’s Office and the Sociology Department for providing the funds to make the trip possible along with Professor Phua for all of his support.
Senior Moments

I feel that I have learned so much as a Sociology major. Thanks to my classes and professors, I understand more about the social issues surrounding me and those I hear about, as well I can understand the context they occur in. I am able to look about me in my daily life and critically think about things I see, read, and hear rather than blindly accepting them at face value.

- Briana Stetler ‘13

Soc taught me to analyze all of the things that go on in front of me. It prepared me with knowledge that can be applied to all walks life.

- Chris Waller ‘13

Sociology allowed me to develop a keen sense of reading other people’s minds in the process of interaction. The most significant part of understanding society in a sociological way is believing that in yourself and depending on whatever you think is right. Going to the movies and eating lobster isn’t the same anymore.

- Alex Zurn ‘13

Being a sociology major has provided me with incredible insight about why I act, think, and feel the way that I do given my demographic information and life experiences. After graduating I intend to enter the teaching force, and I believe that this type of opportunity for introspection is absolutely necessary for one to be an effective teacher. “Know thyself” is an incredibly important maxim for teachers to adhere to, after all.

Moving away from sociology’s specific impact on my self-understanding, there are certainly practical applications for sociological theory and methods in an educational setting. Classes such as Gender Inequalities, Race & Ethnic Studies, Deviance and Urban Studies will be incredibly informative for my teaching. Furthermore, with assessment being as data-driven as it currently is, having a good background in qualitative and quantitative assessment are also extremely important.

I do not mean to underplay the significance that studying sociology has had on my life by merely connecting it to my future profession—although Marx may be perfectly satisfied with that arrangement. In addition to its impact on my teaching, I also believe that studying the discipline has made me a more conscientious citizen, and in that manner I believe it has done an exceptional job of fulfilling the goals of a liberal arts education.

- Joe Miller ‘13

The most important skill I have learned as a major is how to effectively conduct research and analyze data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The skills I have acquired through my methods and statistics classes will be extremely useful. I have also learned to be a critical thinker, and some of the theories we’ve discussed throughout all of my sociology classes had significantly altered the way I view the social world and my own life.

- Chandra Kirkland ‘13

As a sociology major, I have learned to see simple daily interactions and real world situations through a sociological lens. I have learned to think critically about the information that I am given through my classes, through the media, and through social situations. I have been taught to question and to analyze the world around me. Most importantly, I have been given the tools to study phenomena that I find to be interesting!

- Allie Serina ‘13

My experience as a Sociology major has been very nice. Most of the teachers embraced me with open arms a made the late switch to sociology as a major. I have learned a lot of about people over the last 2 years, and I have no one else to thank but the sociology department.

- Sean Boone ‘13

As a Sociology major I have learned how to see through the eyes of another, and understand that there are a million ways to interpret a situation. It has not only helped my interpersonal relationships, but also strengthened my abilities to be an effective leader and critical thinker. Most importantly, as a strong advocate for social justice both on- and off-campus I’ve learned how to identify problems and relate them back to the structural issues that exist in our society. The ability to remove myself from my own predispositions and thought processes has been priceless in my undergraduate journey, and has given me a unique advantage in coming out of college not only with numerous leadership roles, award-winning research, and a secure sense of self, but also with the ability to apply my honed skills in critical analysis, statistical research, and scientific writing to every job I apply for after graduation.

- Emily Lindholm ‘13
News from Alumni:

KC Garvey-Hall ('11) has been accepted to the Urban Teacher Education Program at the University of Chicago; Wandiba Solly ('12) to Drexel University; Christina Laporte ('10) to Hawaii Pacific University; and Suzanne A. Roberts ('12) to Boston University.

Say Goodbye to....

The Sociology Department will be moving to the West Building for academic year 2013-2014. Say goodbye to our mobility (department on wheels), and our short-term mascots (visiting mice).