A New Face in the Department: Professor Brent Harger
By Kim Longfellow ’16

This year has brought significant changes for the Sociology Department at Gettysburg College. Not only has the Department been moved for the third and final time back to newly renovated Glatfelter Hall, but there are also additions to the faculty. Professor Brent Harger, hired at the end of the spring 2014 semester, brings new talents and areas of study to the department.

Professor Harger graduated from Central Michigan University with a double major in English and Sociology. He continued his study of sociology, going to graduate school at Indiana University. Prior to coming to Gettysburg, Professor Harger taught classes while going to graduate school. After graduate school, he went on to teach classes at Albright College for five years. In total, this year marks his tenth year of teaching at the collegiate level.

Professor Harger was motivated to study sociology in college due to a long interest in the interactions between people. Originally he took classes in psychology, but found it lacked the specific focus in which he was interested: “I was interested in interactions. I was not interested in the chemicals of the brain, and that aspect. That’s important, but not what I was actually drawn to.” After discussing class choices with a friend, many of whose classes sounded “way cooler” than his own, he enrolled in a summer introductory sociology course as well as several topical courses for his fall semester. It was in his social psychology course and the study of Symbolic Interactionism that he found the specific focus in which he had been interested.

Inspired by his favorite sociological theorist, George Herbert Meade, Professor Harger’s interest in studying the interactions between people has manifested itself in his research. His recent research has focused on studies of childhood and adolescence, specifically the sociology of education. He has published work on a variety of topics within this area including peer interaction, bullying, gossip, and media portrayals of college and professors. In the future, he hopes to continue his research on bullying, possibly expanding his research into quantitative measurement of bullying. He is also interested in studying the effects of the media’s portrayal of college life on the assumptions and expectations of students entering college. One of the things he says he enjoys specifically about liberal arts colleges is that they do allow you to have more flexibility, allowing a person to expand their research in multiple directions rather than focusing on one specific area.

This past semester, Professor Harger taught one section of “Research Methods” as well as a class on the “Theories of Self.” Next semester he will be teaching two sections of “Research Methods” as well as “Sociology of Education.” When asked about what his “dream class” to teach in the future, Professor Harger replied, “I really like classes that I get to teach anyway,” and continued to say he probably most enjoys teaching topical classes related to his research, such as the sociology of education or classes regarding childhood and adolescence; however, he cites the impact of the students in determining the success and gratification of the class, “It’s nice getting a group of students who are all interested in the same topic […] and looking at it in a way they haven’t before.”

When asked why a student should major in sociology, Professor Harger emphasized the importance of following the topic that the student cares about, rather than only the specific career the student wants in the future. Sociology, he asserts, can be a good major in
that it provides a broad educational base that concerns itself with issues that will be of increasing importance in the future, such as the impact technology and wealth inequalities, among many others. To Professor Harger, “choosing sociology is less about saying what career I want to have after this [...] but what view of the world I want to have.”

If you happen to be walking through the Sociology Department, make sure to stop by Professor Harger’s office and say hello!

Alumni News...

My name is Emily Harsen, ’09. I graduated from Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School in 2012 and served as Justice for Phi Alpha Delta, a legal fraternity. I passed the Georgia State Bar Exam in October of 2012 and started working as an Assistant District Attorney in the Paulding Judicial Circuit the day that I passed the Bar Exam! In January 2014, our office received a Violence Against Women Act Grant which provided the office with a new position for a Special Prosecutor to prosecute Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault crimes. District Attorney Donovan promoted me to this new position within our office and I am working with a talented division consisting of a paralegal, investigator and victim-witness advocate. In October of this year, I was awarded the Paulding Judicial Circuit Rising Star Award for the work that I have done within the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Division.

I am thankful every day for my Sociology background from Gettysburg College. Through my classes in the department, I learned a lot about deviant and criminal behaviors, interactions between individuals and the importance of knowing all the facts before moving forward on any project. It has helped me while being an ADA because I am faced with hundreds of case files, each with a story to tell, and having to determine whether or not to prosecute that particular case. Being a Sociology major gave me the necessary tools to be able to dissect each case file and really get to know and understand my victims, as well as the defendants that I prosecute.

One thing that I wish I had known while I was attending Gettysburg college would be the power of networking. Gettysburg College has an amazing alumni base - I wish I had taken more advantage of it while at school, but can tell the new class of Sociology majors - take every opportunity that you can to network with the Alumni - it will truly help you once you get out of school and are looking for an internship opportunity or a job!


From Gettysburg to Grad School
By Kathleen Ragon ’13

Greetings, Gettysburgians! For those of you who don’t know me, I graduated from Gettysburg in 2013 and am now in the Sociology MA/PhD program at the University of Connecticut. I am currently on a 6-year Graduate Assistantship (GA) as a Research/Teaching Assistant for the Sociology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Departments. Professor Phua asked me to share my experiences during the application process and my first year of graduate school to help those of you who might be considering that path to make a more informed decision.

From my first year at Gettysburg, I knew I wanted to attend grad school after graduation, but I didn’t think much about the actual process. What I came to learn is that choosing a graduate school is quite different from choosing where to go for undergrad. While school prestige and environment are certainly things to consider, when choosing a grad school it is more important to make sure the sociology department is respected in its own right and that there are respected and productive potential mentors in your area of study. In other words, the people who work there are more important than the school as a whole. Additionally, graduate school applications take more time and effort than undergraduate applications, which leads me to this bit of advice...
...Start the process early! The earlier you begin the search process, the more strategic you can be about your work at Gettysburg and the greater chance you will have of being accepted to the school of your choice. You probably want to start deciding in what area of sociology your research interests lie, getting to know the big names in your area of study, and choosing the programs to which you would like to send applications during the second half of your junior year. Applications are usually due anywhere between November and January before the start of the new fall semester. Take note that the application process can also be rather expensive; find out if the schools you are applying to offer application fee waivers and apply for them!

As much as possible, try to tailor your applications to each school; do enough research about each department to know what research strengths and interests they are looking for and emphasize those in your application. Flattery (tactfully done) will get you places - if you are excited about the work of one of the scholars in the department you are applying to, be sure to weave that into the application! Have your advisor and at least one other professor read over your application and make edits before sending it out – they’ve done this before and know what to look for in a strong application.

Once you have received some acceptance letters, it is probably a good idea to visit your top choice departments before committing. If you are having a hard time choosing based on the schools’ appearance on paper, visiting and getting a feel for the campuses and the departments should make your decision easier.

If your goal is a PhD, most worthy departments will fund your education. You are worth their GA funding dollars because you will be doing cutting-edge research which will bring notoriety to the school. If at all possible, find out how the funding works at each school you apply to; are all students funded equally and through what sources? Are the graduate students unionized? Are students responsible for finding alternative funding sources after the first year or two? The best way to get a feel for the department without actually visiting is to contact one or more current graduate students. Their email addresses should be listed on the department website and they will likely be your best resource for good information about the dynamics of the department.

You might be wondering, “how is grad school?” During the first year I took three required courses per semester which met once a week for three hours each. I also took a proseminar course, designed to help us become acclimated to the discipline and how to be good Professional Sociologists, which met for one hour per week all year. With the exception of the proseminar, each course required 150-200 pages of reading per week as well as some kind of written assignment, usually 1-3 pages per week. Each week a different student or pair of students was responsible for presenting the reading material and questions to guide discussion. Each course also required a final project of 15-20 pages, which was designed to help you learn course content and make progress on your thesis.

This may sound scary, but in my experience, your Gettysburg sociology degree will prepare you well for graduate school. Since most graduate courses are seminar-style discussions, I felt right at home after all of the seminar classes I took at Gettysburg. I also felt well prepared in methods and theory, but if you feel like those skills are a little rusty, your department will likely require that you take at least one introductory methods course and one theory course during your first year to help you brush up. In short, the transition from Gettysburg to graduate school was a smooth one for me because of the training I received from everyone in the Gburg Sociology Department.

In addition to coursework, if you are funded through a Graduate Assistantship, you will likely work as a Teaching or Research Assistant. As a Teaching Assistant, I helped with one class each semester grading homework and tests, answering emails, and generally doing any of the work the professor didn’t have time for. During the second semester I also worked as a Research Assistant preparing a literature review for the advising professor.

Finally, the whole reason you are in graduate school is to develop the project that will become your dissertation. Ideally, your primary advisor and the courses you take should be able to help you focus your research interests, so don’t worry too much if you go in with no idea what you want to study. As you will learn, the ultimate goal of graduate school is to earn your degree with as many publications as possible in order to put you in a good position to get your dream job.

Like I said before, the reality is that graduate school is hard. Furthermore, especially in the current market, there is no guarantee of a cushy tenure-track job waiting at the end of six years, so it is even more important to position yourself well right from the get-go at a good school with a strong department. Luckily you’re already part of the way there with your Gettysburg education! If you have any more questions, I would love to be of help. You can contact me at kathleen.ragon@uconn.edu or find me on Facebook.
Happy applying!


**Student Led Discussions**

- **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**

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**Dean’s List Spring 2014**

- Isabelle Boguski ‘15
- Alessandra Bonafide ‘16
- Bridget Golato ‘15
- Elizabeth Jones ‘14
- Alexander Klimek ‘14
- Sarah Kramer ‘17
- Kimberly Longfellow ‘16
- Katherine Lynch ‘14
- Jenny Morris ‘14
- Kathryn Needham ‘14
- Katherine Patterson ‘15
- Alexandra Richmond ‘17
- Nadejiah Towns ‘15
- Anne Weber ‘15
- Amy Whitehouse ‘15

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**Survey Results of Sociology Majors Spring 2014**

By Nadejiah Towns ‘15

Students studying sociology highlight a variety of learning experiences from courses and interactions with faculty in the department. Many sociology majors are taking their knowledge outside of the classroom and using it as a “mental framework” to better “understand society more clearly”. Students feel they are better able to “understand [their] own life experiences” and “how [their] lives shape others” through analyzing daily interactions through a sociological lens. Through sociological theory, majors learn to think objectively, recognize their personal biases, and work diligently to...
overcome those preferences in order to truly understand the context of social issues arising in modern society. Using theory, students are able to look at social situations from a variety of perspectives. For some students, studying theory “changed [their] perspective on a lot of aspects of life, especially politics”.

Students taking advantage of research opportunities express several benefits from their experience, including valuable research skills and “developing an understanding of a wide variety of theoretical orientation within the discipline.” Students are not only intrigued by theory and research, but the “interesting electives” the department offers, such as the global sexualities course taught by Professor Phua. In addition, students found that “close relationships [they] were able to develop with each of [their] professors made these experiences even more rewarding and worthwhile”.

The students also have suggestions to further enrich the sociology experience for future majors. Potential majors could benefit from an even wider variety of courses to fulfill requirements and electives, particularly “more fun classes like deviance and sexualities”. Students also suggested a stronger focus on applied sociology for students considering options other than graduate school. Although the sociology department is “better than most departments” at establishing student-faculty relationships, there is room for improvement. Professor Gill, for example, hosted a brunch for her students at her house, which students feel “really [does] make a difference for both the student and the teacher”. There is also room for improvement in the sense of community and cohesion among students taking up

Students are looking to use their sociology degrees in a variety of ways after graduation. While 50% of majors plan to apply their knowledge directly into the work field, 36% left with existing job offers and 14% are enrolled into graduate schools.

Finally Home....

After three long years of being a campus-nomad, the Sociology Department has returned to Glatfelter Hall for the Fall Semester to what promises to be our forever home. Please look for us on the first floor in the newly renovated building.

Managing Editors:
Miranda Wisor and Andrea Switzer
Supervising Faculty:
Dr. Voon Chin Phua and Dr. Charles Emmons