

# Sociological Illumination

## Willamette University Sociology Department Newsletter

### *A Message from the Future Chair...*

It is my distinct honor to open this second installment of our annual department newsletter as the "Chair-designate" for 2010. In the coming academic year, our intrepid and able leader, Linda Heuser, will begin to transition these duties to me. I cannot think of a more important way to begin this newsletter than by asking all of you to join me in expressing our very sincere gratitude to Linda for all that she has done to keep our program vibrant and pointed toward the future. We are thrilled that Linda will soon have the opportunity to take her sabbatical and, upon her return, to finally have more time available to pursue her teaching, research, and community interests. Thanks, Linda!

I will assume chair duties at a very exciting time for us. Over the past four years, we have experienced almost complete turnover in our faculty ranks. Emily Drew and I arrived in

2005, Jade Aguilar in 2008, and we will be joined on a permanent basis in 2009 by our current adjunct colleague, Stas Vysotsky. We hope to add one more colleague in the near future and, of course, Linda continues with us, as well. In these transitional years, we have been working to update and focus our curriculum, and expect to complete this process this Spring with a planned departmental workshop on our 400-level courses and our senior experience.

I invite you to read on in this newsletter to learn more about where we are and where we are headed. If you would like to see more, please visit our department website. Even better, share with us what you have been up to! We would love to hear from you.

Kelley Strawn  
Chair-designate, 2010-2011

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### Where are you now?

Please email [hwilson@willamette.edu](mailto:hwilson@willamette.edu) describing what you are currently doing with your major in sociology. We want to feature you in an upcoming newsletter.

If you would be willing to talk with current WU sociology majors about what you do and how you got to where you are today, please mail your business card, resume, brochures etc... to:

Honey Wilson  
Willamette University  
Sociology Department  
900 State St.  
Salem, OR 97301

Calling all WU  
Sociology graduates!  
We want to connect with you!

The sociology department has experienced much activity during the 2008-2009 academic year!

### Comings... and Goings ...

Sudarat Musikawong, Lausanne Graduate Fellow, will be joining the Sociology Department at Siena College in New York as Assistant Professor. She will be teaching Sociology core courses and expanding their Media Studies curriculum.

## CURRENT STUDENT NEWS...

**Outstanding Social Justice Award**  
Alejandro Jimenez-Zepeda & Anthony Kim



**James B. Bjorkquist Award**  
for Outstanding Juniors in Sociology  
Katie Lutz & Amy Rising

**C. Wright Mills Award**  
for Outstanding Senior in Sociology  
Joshua Clough

**Phi Beta  
Kappa**  
2009 inductees

Nikki Boyce  
Maggie Wilkens  
Marissa Williams

**Department Honors**  
2009 recipients  
Josh Clough  
Marissa Williams

Hi everyone! My name is Danielle Espiritu. I'm currently finishing up my senior year at Willamette and am majoring in Sociology and minoring in American Ethnic Studies and History. I recently completed my internship at Willamette Academy as part of my "senior experience" and capstone to my Sociology major. My internship has allowed me to explore my interest in education as a way to create positive social change and to address the inequalities in our society, allowing me to apply what I have learned in Sociology as well as Ethnic Studies to real situations. After graduation in May, I will be going back home to Hawai'i and will begin as a Teach for America Hawai'i corps member. This will enable me to take what I have learned and my experiences at Willamette into teaching as a way to create change and to give back to my own community.



## CURRENT FACULTY NEWS...

**Prof. Heuser:**

It is an exciting time for me as a faculty member at Willamette. As some of you know, I have been deeply involved and committed to the American Studies Program at WU/TIUA. This year is a particularly important one as I have had the great honor to help plan celebratory activities for TIUA's 20th anniversary. Additionally, I have taught my first new course, called *What is Community?*, in over a decade. With great anticipation, I look forward to a sabbatical in 2010-2011 that will give me the time to begin two personally meaningful research projects. I intend to undertake a study of women with breast cancer and the ways they cope with hair loss and reconstructive surgery as well as start an investigation of the socially constructed meaning of community among soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, that's enough about me!

**Prof. Strawn:**

On Oregon's primary election day—May 20, 2008—I participated as a guest commentator/analyst on the national bilingual radio program, *Linea Abierta*, which was broadcast locally from Woodburn, OR. The show focused on trends in the 2008 presidential election at that point in time, and topics discussed related to Latino political interests and voting trends. Since the last newsletter, I have published—or have forthcoming—three peer-reviewed articles.

**Prof. Drew:**

I have begun an interesting new research project about gentrification in northeast Portland. I have been doing qualitative research at a community forum in which long-term African-American residents explain to the new residents, who are largely white and middle-class, how neighborhood change and how their new neighbors' "white behaviors" are harmful for them. From whites making People of Color feel invisible in their own community and treating dogs better than their children, to City processes that erode Black gathering spaces and limit access to economic opportunities, the panelists lay out racism's macro and micro manifestations through their experiences. I will present this research at the annual American Sociological Association conference in August.

**Prof. Aguilar:**

The National Gay and Lesbian Task force estimates that, by 2030, there will be an estimated 6 million GLBT elders living in the United States. These elders face unique challenges such as discrimination from institutionalized homophobia in the medical and care industries, often without children to ensure their safety and well-being. In response to the growing number of GLBT seniors, several identity-specific retirement communities have recently opened in the United States with several more in the planning stages. By interviewing the residents of these communities, I hope to gain a better understanding of what drew these seniors to them and the issues that face aging members of the GLBT community.

## New Faculty...sort of

As many of you know, I have been teaching as an adjunct and visiting professor in the Sociology Department for several years now. I am proud to say that the department and Willamette University will be my 'home.' I am looking forward to the future here as a tenure-track faculty member teaching courses in theory, social psychology, deviance, criminal justice, and my other interests.

I've recently completed and defended my dissertation, "The Good Fight: Variations in Explanations of the Tactical Repertoires Made by Activists Who Confront Organized White Supremacists." This research looked into the role of ideology and threat in explaining the tactical choices made by anti-racist activists in response to white supremacist activity. It is an extension of my research into supremacist groups and social movement militancy. I look forward to expanding on this work by examining other forms of militant activism, the culture of gun ownership, and the role of subculture in developing and maintaining supremacist movements. I hope to bring my knowledge of these topics and experience in the field into the classroom as practical examples of the topics discussed.

When I'm not interviewing militants or looking at white power websites, I enjoy watching television and movies, reading graphic novels, and collecting music. I also enjoy traveling and feel lucky that I'm in a profession that facilitates field work. I'm looking forward to many years of teaching and scholarship at Willamette. -Stanislav Vysotsky

## Catching Up with Alumni...



It is just amazing that almost 10 years have passed since I studied SPSS with all of the awesome folks in Sociology (including David Nelson! Hi!). I fondly remember playing Japanese "Taiko" drum as a TIUA student and, after that, being a WU Sociology major and Psychology minor. WU was such a great experience for me. I will always cherish my memories. After leaving WU, I came back to TIU where I received a masters degree in sociology in 2004. Since then, I have been engaged in two activities that could be defined as my lifework.

"Taiko" Therapy is one of my life's work. Taiko Therapy considers the relationship between Taiko and human emotion in clinical fields dealing with mental disorder and illness. I realized the positive affects of Taiko therapy since I began playing for patients with mental illness at The Christie School, in Portland. For me, the positive response was anticipated; however, for the staff, it was unusual and unbelievable when school children with a developmental disorder spontaneously expressed an urge to play Taiko. It was such a thrilling moment for me. Through these findings, I now practice Taiko Therapy for patients in a mental hospital near Tokyo. It is sometimes a challenge, but it is all worth it when patients express to me their profound appreciation for the session by crying and saying "thank you."

My other lifework involves helping students at TIU study abroad. As part of my work in the International Exchange Center, I send students to various short-term programs all over the world. One of my jobs is to make the program smooth and sometimes to escort the students on site. I just finished my mission to accompany 24 students to Australia this February for 3 weeks. They really had a great time, but also sometimes needed a little help from me and their host families. Playing the role of their older brother, I listened to their voices and had some advice to offer because of my experience at Willamette.

Without my experiences and various meetings and partings with so many wonderful people, I would not be the person who I am today, and not be in the position I am now enjoying. Thanks, SPSS (Ups!) and Willamette!

-Masa "Taiko" Goto      taiko\_masa@hotmail.com



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Sociology Department  
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## **Sociology Faculty—Fall 2009 Courses**

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**Jade Aguilar**

Assistant Professor  
213 Smullin Hall, 503.370.6195  
aguilarj@willamette.edu

*Navigating Social Worlds; Families; College Colloquium: White Weddings Unveiled: Examining the Wedding Industrial Complex*

**Emily Drew**

Assistant Professor  
214 Smullin Hall, 503.370.6556  
edrew@willamette.edu

*Introduction to American Ethnic Studies; Race and Ethnic Relations; Urban Sociology*

**Linda Heuser**

Professor and Department Chair  
215 Smullin Hall, 503.370.6915  
lheuser@willamette.edu

*Methods of Social Research; Group Dynamics and Organizational Culture; TIUA American Society*

**Kelley Strawn**

Assistant Professor  
212 Smullin Hall, 503.370.6196  
kstrawn@willamette.edu

*Navigating Social Worlds; Social Statistics; College Colloquium: Juggernauts of Popular Culture: The Internet and Consumerism*

**Stanislav Vysotsky**

Assistant Professor, Fall 2009  
209 Smullin Hall, 503.370.6313  
svysotsk@willamette.edu

*Crime, Delinquency, and the Criminal Justice System; Sociological Theory; Individual in Society: Social Psychology*