Ashley Mears Featured Speaker

Last year we were graced with a visit by Ashley Mears, whose book *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model* was this year’s common book for all introductory sociology courses. Mears is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Boston University. She holds a BA degree from the University of Georgia and PhD in sociology from the New York University.

Her book is well-written, providing a nice balance of personal accounts of the fashion industry markets in New York and London, supplemented with some fairly complicated sociological theory expressed clearly enough that it can be comprehended by first year college students. Anyone who has read Bourdieu, who informs much of her work, knows just what an accomplishment that is! Not only does the book offer insight on an important arena of cultural production and how beauty is commodified, it also provides valuable insights on how cultural definitions of beauty can be applied to a wide range of industries and economic transactions. It suggests the subtle ways in which gender, race, and class shape worth in many marketplaces. As such, it is an important contribution to economic sociology.

Building off of this research, she is starting a new project on the global context of culture and beauty. She is particularly interested in the cultural and economic underpinnings of the global model scouting industry which supplies fresh talent, often from the Global South, to fashion cities like Paris, New York, and Tokyo. This research will trace the global flows of value in this culture industry and discover how beauty, race, and gender differences are imagined and produced across and within international borders.

The fact that the 130-seat lecture room was voluntarily filled with students for an April evening presentation is a testament to the impression her book left on them. We spotted students in the audience that read the book last fall and were not currently taking sociology classes! Her presentation did not disappoint. Students in class the next day were excited by her ideas and were looking forward to reading about her future projects. They also were thrilled to have the opportunity to meet and talk with her! She has a great future ahead.
2013 GRADUATES

The following students graduated in June with a sociology major.

SHANIQUE BLACKWELL
MALLORY BOYD
MARY PAT BRADSHAW
KRISTI BRANDON
CHELSEA BREWER
HILARY DAHL
ERIC EATON
ALAINA GILLIS
HUNTER GLENN
MARTHA HALL
LEIGH HARRIS
SARAH HARRISON
TIM HARTER
LEAH HASSEL
LAURA HINSON
KATIE IANNACE
REBECCA JONES
PIETER LEHMAN
CONLIN LYNCH
JESSICA RATE
ROSE PATRICK
HILARY RUTZ
ELIZABETH SCHILL
NADIA SHAMSADDIN
KATIE SHARP
SARAH SLAUGHTER
HANNAH TURNER
SOPHIE VARN
KALEIGH WARD

Faculty News

Allison Hurst

Having earned tenure and been promoted to associate professor, I spent fall 2012 on sabbatical, surveying more than 1000 seniors at liberal arts colleges around the country. I’ve been working with two outside collaborators analyzing the data collected and have applied for an NSF grant to continue the project. We hope to publish our initial findings—that parental financial assistance matters a great deal in the success of outcomes of liberal arts graduates—soon. I’d also like to report that hiking through the south of France is great fun!

Ken Kolb

It is hard to believe that I’m starting my sixth year. It seems like only yesterday I was a nervous graduate student on the job market preparing my teaching demonstration for my on-campus interview (I did an interactive exercise on the concepts of structure and agency—for those of you keeping score at home). Fast forward to the present, and I feel quite at home. My daughter, Vivian (who was only two weeks old during that first job interview), just started kindergarten, and my spouse, Sarah, is keeping the ship afloat at the Centering Pregnancy program for the Greenville Health System (which we co-authored a paper on last year).

The seminar program at Furman is finally coming to a close. We’ve had two papers published from the data so far (both co-authored with Furman Advancement undergraduate research associates (Mollie Jensen and Jenna Barmett) and one more paper currently under review (with Alexa Singer). As for my primary research project on victim advocates and counselors, I finally got a book contract: look for it in August 2014. And I’m looking forward to start my new research project on public librarians next year during my sabbatical. All in all, it has been a great year in Greenville, and I’m looking forward to many more!

Kyle C. Longest

The more things change, the more things stay the same. In rereading my previous newsletter entries to prepare for writing this one, I was struck by the pernicious of this oft repeated maxim to my still newish career here at Furman. Much like in 2011, perhaps the most significant event over the past year in my life was personal, rather than professional. Our family welcomed our second child in February, two years and one week removed from the arrival of our first. Seeing my overwhelmed reaction in that 2011 entry (on Youth and Adolescence) allowed me to truly appreciate how much our students grow and improve as scholars and people. As professors, it’s amazing what we have the opportunity to work with students in this capacity. Further, having both sections, I believe, only furthered my ability to effectively teach these courses. Confronted by an even wider array of students’ learning styles, pushed me to enhance my teaching strategies, which continue the project. We hope to publish our initial findings—that parental financial assistance matters a great deal in the success of outcomes of liberal arts graduates—soon. I’d also like to report that hiking through the south of France is great fun!

In the classroom, this year was a bit of an initial culmination of sorts. Being my fourth year, I saw firsthand the progress that many students who I had in Intro to Sociology as first-year students, had made during their time at Furman and in the sociology major. Teaching both the methods sequence and a senior seminar (on Youth and Adolescence) allowed me to truly appreciate how much our students grow and improve as scholars and people. As professors, it’s amazing what we have the opportunity to work with students in this capacity. Further, having both sections, I believe, only furthered my ability to effectively teach these courses. Confronted by an even wider array of students’ learning styles, pushed me to enhance my teaching strategies, which I think will benefit many future students.

Another major change, also connected to the Methods sequence, was the department’s transition away from SPSS to Stata, as the primary statistical program taught in its quantitative training. Stata has taken hold as the main statistical program implemented by the top graduate programs and professors, as well as becoming more popular in the non-academic research and private sectors. Having our undergraduate students trained in this central program will make them more competitive in both future academic and employment applications, in addition to giving them a head start in both of these endeavors. I would like to thank both the Faculty Development Committee and First-Year Seminar Committee for their funding that allowed us to install Stata on all 12 of the computers in the sociology computer lab.

Outside of the classroom, I was fortunate to achieve a personal milestone in my career. My first book, Using Stata for Quantitative Analysis, was published this past December by Sage Press. This book is explicitly designed as a tool for instructors of undergraduate (or first year) graduate statistics courses. In this way, I intended it to be a way for me to connect my teaching and professional activity. Again, given the growing popularity of Stata in sociology programs, I believe this book will serve as an important tool for many students.

Kristy Maher

In the summer of 2012, I started collaborating with a local non-profit organization in the village of Maun, Botswana (where I live in the summers with my husband), called WAR — Women Against Rape. I provide expertise on “Monitoring and Evaluation” for some of their programs designed to reduce violence against women (and children). In the fall of 2012, this created a research opportunity for sociology major, Carrie Steiger, to conduct quantitative analysis on survey data exploring the issue of defilement. We are currently preparing these results for presentation at a professional conference.

The spring of 2013 brought another offering of the Southern Africa Study Away program which I direct which included some exciting new course offerings (e.g. a course on photography offered by a faculty person from the art department) and a couple of new destinations. Specifically, we drove the “Garden Route” in South Africa from Durban to Cape Town, with stops in Grahamstown, the home of Rhodes University, and we visited Botswana (where I live) in Namibia for some sunrise and sunset photography opportunities of the magniﬁcent dunes.
Christin Munsch
I have had a busy past year! I moved from Ithaca, New York, to Palo Alto, California, for a one-year postdoc at the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University. I am thrilled with the opportunities that were available to me there and the people I got to meet. I was able to continue researching and publishing in the area of masculinity, and I started several new research projects including one on flexible work and one on singlism. I got to work with Cecilia Ridgeway, the current president of the American Sociological Association.

Aaron Passell
This past year has been a big one. Adapting to life at Furman has been easy, as everyone has been very welcoming and supportive. I enjoyed my classes and met a lot of great students, some of whom will continue in sociology, I hope. A couple things happened off campus, like the birth of my second son, Matteo, in the second week of class, which further livened up an already exciting year.

A teaching highlight for the year was my Consumption class in the spring. It was an opportunity for me to explore an area of the sociological literature with my students that I hadn’t previously gotten to dig into, but more, we did a number of interesting experiments about personal consumption practices that made a big impression on everyone, I think.

My book, Building the New Urbanism, was published by Routledge and got a positive reception in a few places where it counted. I had the fun of writing a chapter for Paul Thomas in education on science fiction novels as sociological experiments, something I’d been thinking about for years and which my FYW takes up.

Helping out with the Student League for Black Culture and a variety of CLPs, including “How should white people be involved in the fight against racism?” meant engaging in challenging conversations with students and watching them work through issues to build connections with others. It’s been a good year, and I’m looking forward to the next one.

Paul Kooistra, Chair
It has been a great year in the sociology department, with the addition of two outstanding faculty members. There have been some important changes in our curriculum, and there has been a lot of student-faculty research taking place!

On the research front, students Peter Lehmann and Hannah Turner worked with me on a paper titled “Race, Rock, and Relationships; which was accepted for the Southern Sociological Society meetings this past spring. This paper was a content analysis of song lyrics that charted number 1 on Billboard from 1956–2011 for three genres of music: pop, country, and rhythm & blues/hip hop. Our concern was three-fold: First, to what extent does the content of popular songs between musical genres differ in regard to messages about intimate relationships, especially in regard to gender role dynamics? Second, have there been significant changes over time in musical genres regarding messages about intimate relationships? Third, do gender role presentations differ by the gender of the song artist. Findings were that various forms of popular music, directed primarily at youth, reflect and subtly reinforce popular views about sexuality, gender roles and intimate. Furthermore, over time these images about sex and intimacy have changed, especially for forms of popular culture, directed primarily at African-American audiences. We concluded that these gender scripts perpetuate stereotypes of race and gender held by audiences for whom the media content is not intended.

In addition, Paul Harrison (Lander) and I have been working on what we hope will be a book about the shifting perceptions of social class over the past century in Harlan County, Kentucky. This small isolated rural community keeps popping up in American political and popular culture. We explore how images of social class and class conflict change in two papers we have written so far. One is “Harlan County, Organized Deviance, and Collective Memory” which we presented at the Southern Sociological Society meetings in spring 2012. The other is “Harlan County, Social Class and Collective Amnesia: The Interplay of Structure and Culture,” which we discussed at the Eastern Sociological Society Meetings, In Boston, March 2013. Finally, I presented a paper dubiously titled “The Road to Hell” at the American Criminological Society meet- ings in Washington, D.C., in November 2011. In this work, my basic premise is that killing a human being is very difficult emotionally for the overwhelming majority of the population, regardless of the context. Even in war, those who kill are often filled with guilt and remorse for decades following. Using as a framework Sykes and Matza’s techniques of neutralization, I show how this aversion to killing is neutralized by placing individuals in organizational structures—both macro level bureaucratic and micro level small primary groups—that allow for killings to take place, and that a key role of these structures is to provide justifications and emotional support for taking human life.

For news from the family, Tristan has completed medical school at Harvard and is now a first year resident at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. Russell is now in his second year of law school at George Washington University and intern- ing at a D.C. law firm (for pay)! He is planning to go into energy law. And now that the boys are out of the house, Carol has decided to invent herself as a tennis player. We joined a tennis club in Spartan- burg, where she plays on multiple teams of different age groups and combinations that have won their Upstate tennis leagues. She is playing in four different tournaments to determine state champions (in Aiken, Hilton Head, and twice at Isle of Palms out- side Charleston). I am also hitting the fuzzy yellow ball, but I still have my noon faculty-staff basketball games. So my zeal for tennis is not quite as great as I only got to play in one state tournament, where we finished second, which is good because the winner has to go to Mobile Alabama to play in a regional tournament!

Donations, Welcome!
As we continue to grow, big things are still happening in the sociology department. We now have a steady stream of students presenting papers at professional sociology conferences and attending graduate school. We are hoping to help our students further by building a fund that will allow us to bring past graduates back to Furman to speak to current majors about the graduate school experience and beyond.

We also wish to help supplement the cost of taking students to professional meetings to present their work. Consequently, we are hoping that you might give donations directly to the sociol- ogy department for those purposes. No amount is too small. Thanks!

Make your donation online at https://alumni.furman.edu/netcommunity/soc page.aspx?pid=773 or mail to Furman University Office of Development 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613 Fund ID:1823000.

DEPARTMENT AWARDS
2012 - 2013
JOHNSON WEBB  LAURA HINGSON  ALANNA GILLIS

DAN COVER  LAURA HINGSON  REBECCA JONES

ELTA COVER  ALLANA GILLIS  KALEIGH WARD

DAVID REDBURN  KAYLEIGH WARD