

# Social Facts

August 2015

## Featured Speaker: Alice Goffman

Each year the sociology department assigns one book across all sections of the standard Introduction to Sociology course. We try to pick a book that will capture the attention of first time sociology students and offer plenty of material for class discussion. We also invite the author to Furman to give a talk in the spring. This is one of the most popular programs organized by the sociology department each year. Hundreds of students read and discuss the book in class and a few months later get to hear a lecture by the author in person.

This year, we chose *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, by Alice Goffman. As some of you may remember, this book attracted a much larger popular audience than most sociological publications. Featured in outlets like *The New York Times Review of Books* and *The Atlantic*, Alice Goffman's book offered a vivid and dramatic account of what it is like to live in a neighborhood that is constantly under police surveillance.

Given the political and social upheaval in the aftermath of protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, and New York, *On The Run* showed students how timely and relevant sociological analysis can inform policy decisions and shape public debates. A dramatic and compelling read, students had no problem applying Goffman's findings to current events and their own everyday observations.

Alice Goffman's talk in the spring was well received. The large seminar room in Johns Hall 101 was packed, and the Q&A afterward went well past the allotted time. A number of sociology majors were also able to meet with Goffman over coffee to talk about graduate schools and what it was like to conduct her ethnographic research.



Department of Sociology  
Johns Hall  
Furman University  
3300 Poinsett Highway  
Greenville, SC 29613



## 2015 Graduates

The following sociology students graduated in June:

*Christin Anthony  
Hannah Beach  
Mary Kayla Brooks  
Olivia Brown  
Natalie Clemmons  
Abby Cooper  
Sarah Devenny  
Courtney German  
Haley Gilleran  
Andrew Kraska  
Adam Lilly  
Alex Moreno-Kaste  
Caroline Ponatoski  
Shelby Price  
Gillian Scharf  
Emily Sherman  
Hope Smith  
Caroline Solomon  
Megan Steele  
Cassie Wodecki*

## Faculty News

### *Joe Merry*

Here I am typing up a department newsletter entry as an Assistant Professor (!) at Furman University (!) in my new office that has a window (!). Was it really just 4 months ago that I was a graduate student at (The) Ohio State University working in a windowless office? I am so happy and excited to be a member of this tremendous department and I foresee many great years of teaching, researching, collaborating, and getting to know everyone in the Furman Sociology family.

Now, here's the rundown on my details – 1) teaching, 2) research, and 3) family. For my first semester at Furman, I'm thoroughly enjoying my classes, SOC 101 and Research Methods. I get to know students with all sorts of interests and majors in 101 (while trying to convert them to best discipline the University has to offer...) and then talk with soc majors about their fascinating research interests in the Methods course – it's working out to be a great balance and I'm looking forward to developing these courses and others (if you're looking for a class in the Spring, you should take Sociology of Education!). In my research world, I have 3 main projects that I'm alternat-

ing between these days. One is a manuscript I'm preparing based on my dissertation which asks the question: "Are Schools Becoming the Great(er) Equalizer?" This project uses seasonal assessment data in a way that more clearly separates school and non-school influences on children's cognitive development. I'm curious to see if/how the role of schools in society has changed as inequality has grown in recent decades and social conditions have become more challenging for those growing up in the lowest income quintile.

The two other projects focus on the growing trend of student participation in formal academic-oriented lessons that occur outside of regular school hours, like private tutoring. These supplemental lessons have been conceptualized more broadly by previous researchers as 'shadow education' – because they 1) seem to follow and take the shape of regular school lessons and they are also 2) largely hidden or 'lurking in the shadows'.

Finally, on the family/personal front – Emma and I are settling in nicely to our new surroundings in Greenville. We're on a mission to find our new go-to places for 1) pizza and

2) Thai food, recommendations are always welcome. We're also loving our new proximity to the coast and the mountains and looking forward to our first winter in the south, which will be a welcome change after some of the recent polar vortexes in the Midwest.

### **Claire Whitlinger**

2015 was an exciting year! I completed my PhD, got married, moved from Michigan to Greenville, and joined the faculty at Furman. It's been a whirlwind, but I couldn't be more excited to be here.

For the past six years I've been conducting research in Mississippi on commemorations of racial violence (their causes and consequences). During these trips I've had the pleasure of interacting with and interviewing dozens of fascinating, courageous, and generous folks. In the process, I also racked up tens of thousands of miles on my car (Michigan to Mississippi is 16+ hours!). So far, two articles have come out of this research – both published in 2015. I'm planning to draft a third article in the coming months, which will examine attempts to establish a truth commission in Mississippi modeled

after South African's post-Apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (<http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>).

I cannot recall a time in my life where the study of racial violence and its legacies has seemed more imperative. From Ferguson to the flag debate in South Carolina, discussions about race and memory are in the national spotlight. It's an exciting time to be studying these topics. I look forward to continuing my research at Furman, and especially getting to know the sociology majors and student body as a whole. If you're interested in social movements, race, collective memory, or pretty much any other sociological topic, please feel free to stop by my office. I'm happy to chat about issues in the news, life as a "Soc" major, or even life after Furman. Did I mention that I really love sociology?!

### **Ken Kolb**

The past year has been an exciting one. In July of 2014 my book, *Moral Wages: The Emotional Dilemmas of Victim Advocacy and Counseling* finally came out with the University of California Press. So far it has received some favorable re-

## **Keep in touch!**

We love hearing from our SOC major alumni. If you would like to be included in the Alumni News section of our next newsletter, please send your information to: Gail McDiarmid Sociology Department Furman University 3300 Poinsett Hwy Greenville, SC 29613 or email [gail.mcdiarmid@furman.edu](mailto:gail.mcdiarmid@furman.edu)



## Alpha Kappa Delta Initiates:

*Adam Lilly  
Hannah Beach  
Mary Katherine  
Buchanan  
Alexandra Bailey  
Valentina Romero  
Oluwatobi Olaiya  
Abigail Arvanites*

## 2014–15 Awards:

**Johnson Webb**  
*Shelby Price*

**Dan Cover**  
*Abbie Arvanites  
Jill Fredi*

**Elta Cover**  
*Gillian Scharf  
Cassie Wodecki*

**David Redburn**  
*Christin Anthony*

views in a few sociology journals. It also won the book award from the Social Psychology section of the American Sociological Association. But, best of all, the project is officially done. I started collecting data on that topic in 2005, so it has been a long journey. The book is now on the shelf and it is time to start something new.

I was granted tenure in August of 2014 and I took my sabbatical in the Spring of 2015. During that time I started my new research project is on the issue of food access in Greenville by conducting hour long interviews of residents in two official “Food Deserts” in our backyard, the Southernside and West Greenville neighborhoods. The USDA defines food deserts as urban areas with high rates of poverty, low rates of car ownership, and no grocery store within a one mile radius.

Although a lot of research has mapped out these areas and measured the high rates of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension often found within them, few studies have sought out the individual perspectives of the people who live in them. So, for the past year, I have been talking with residents to learn how they manage to make 21 meals a week work. Those interviews are ongoing and I hope to complete

100 of them by the next year.

In much of the scholarship on food deserts, farmers markets are seen as a potential opportunity to get fresh fruits and vegetables to areas that are underserved by grocery stores. To gauge the likelihood that local farms can help solve the food desert problem, I have collaborated with a number of sociology majors (Shelby Price, Alex Bailey, Shakirie Simmons) to survey customers of a “mobile farmers market” that trucks healthy food into these neighborhoods in Greenville. I also did some hands on fieldwork at Greenbrier Farm in Dacusville, SC to see what it was like to grow produce and bring it to market.

This is my main research focus for the next few years, and I look forward to incorporating more Furman students into my project and co-authoring papers with them in the future.

On the home-front, my spouse, Sarah, is doing a great job organizing the Centering Pregnancy prenatal care program at the Greenville Health System’s OB/GYN clinic. And our daughter, Vivian, is an energetic 2nd grader (I still can’t believe it) at Blythe Academy in their Spanish language immersion program.



We recently bought a new home in West Greenville and are excited to see what this next phase in our lives brings us.

### ***Kristy Maher***

Dr. Kristy Maher offered a new-200 level course in the Fall of 2014 called “Social Determinants of Health.” This course created an additional opportunity for sociology majors and others interested in health to learn about the area of medical sociology. SOC 262 was over-enrolled (25 students) with students from a variety of majors including Sociology, Health Sciences, and “pre-med” majors like Biology and Chemistry. It was also popular among students pursuing a Poverty Studies Interdisciplinary Minor (the course carried both HB and PVS credit). The course examined such things as how social class, race and ethnicity affect health outcomes in the United States. It also looked globally at policy decisions made at the governmental level and how these had an impact on eventual health outcomes

for citizens of selected countries around the world.

In the Spring, Dr. Maher directed the Southern Africa Study Away Program (for the 5th time). Twenty students (all female!) joined her to travel around South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. Faculty from the departments of Art, Psychology and History also offered courses on the program. Her course on “Global Health Inequalities” explored cultural factors contributing to the HIV/AIDS epidemic as well as social factors facilitating the spread of malaria and TB. A critical examination of the role of foreign aid in helping ameliorate global health inequities was also incorporated. Site visits included private and public hospital tours, lectures from an ethnobotanist, a bush veld walk with a group of Bushmen, and many visits to non-governmental organizations focused on improving the health of people in this region of the world.

While in town, Dr. Maher was actively involved in strengthening the newly formed relationship between Furman and the Greenville Health System (Furman is now the undergraduate affiliate to the hospital system). This included two invited presentations, one at Student Grand Rounds for the

new branch of the University of South Carolina, School of Medicine in Greenville. The talk was entitled, “Cross-Cultural Health Care Delivery Systems.” It compared a variety of major global health systems, their strengths and weaknesses with the goal of helping medical students better understand how our own American healthcare system works. She also presented at the Furman/GHS Population Health Summit. She spoke on “Public Health Lessons from Cuba” drawing heavily from her work preparing for the Latin America Study Away trip and in country travel experiences to Cuba in the Spring of 2012.

Finally, Dr. Maher also worked with other faculty members on Furman’s campus to develop a new interdisciplinary minor called, “Medicine, Health and Culture.” To complete this minor students must take medically/health related courses from a variety of disciplines including Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, History, Health Sciences and others. The minor will start enrolling students in the Fall of 2015. She expects it will be very popular!



## ***Paul Kooistra***

It has been a great year in the sociology department, with the addition of two outstanding faculty members. There have been some major changes in our curriculum, and there has been a lot of student-faculty research taking place! I have a paper dubiously titled *The Road to Hell* that has been accepted for publication by the journal *Deviant Behavior*. In this work my basic premise is that killing of 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.

I also have a paper accepted at the American Society of Criminology meetings this coming November that discusses how PTSD may be explained as an outcome of the failure of neu-

tralizations. When soldiers lose the social support for participating in violent acts, whether it be from no longer being a daily part of a platoon or from living in a society that has judged past or ongoing armed conflict as no longer justifiable, neutralizations for committing violence no longer work to assuage feelings of guilt and remorse. I am planning to present another version of this paper at the Eastern Sociological Society Meetings in Boston this coming March, and will also be attending the Southern Sociological Society meetings in Atlanta this Spring, where I will be putting together a session on organized deviance. In addition, Dan Harrison (Lander) and continue to work on what we hope will be a book about the shifting perceptions of social class over the past century in Harlan County, KY. We explore how images of social class and class conflict change in two papers we have written so far. We are working on another paper that discusses the role music has played in making Harlan County an icon of rural poverty.

Now for news from the family. Tristan has completed medical school at Harvard and is now a second year resident at Beth Israel hospital in Boston. Russell has graduated from law George Washington Univer-

sity Law School and has been hired by a DC law firm, specializing in 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 clubs in Spartanburg and Greenville, where she plays on multiple teams of different age groups and combinations that have won their Upstate tennis leagues. I am also hitting the fuzzy yellow ball, and have semi-retired from my noon faculty-staff basketball games.

## ***Sally Morris***

As a graduate of Furman's sociology department, I was thrilled this year to return in January to teach two classes alongside my former professors. This past spring, I taught an introductory sociology course and an upper level course on social class in the United States. As a student at Furman, I was caught inside the "Furman" bubble, and as such, have been working to incorporate opportunities for my

students to burst the bubble through their coursework. This past spring, the 23 students in the social class course volunteered with over ten different nonprofits and agencies in Greenville working to serve lower-income populations in the area; they worked everywhere from Meals on Wheels to the Frazee Dream Center. The students in Introduction to Sociology also were not exempt from activities that took them outside of the classroom. Students explored Greenville's religious side by choosing religious worship/prayer services or gatherings to observe and analyze through a sociological lens. They ended up attending a variety of events, from a large nondenominational Christian Sunday service at Greenville's TD Convention Center to a prayer service at the Vedic Center, a Hindu religious center.

In addition to teaching, I have been focused on collecting over 80 in-depth interviews with community gardeners for my dissertation.

I seek to understand what effectiveness looks like in these kinds of local, voluntary organizations and what factors contribute to making these kinds of organizations a success or failure. Much of the study of voluntary organizations has been on nonprofits that operate at the regional or national level or with local chapters tied to a national organization. What we don't know much about is how the independent, small voluntary organizations that bring people together and make change at the local level work. I aim for my research to be useful to these practitioners as they try to better the Greenville community.

My interest in nonprofits and community change also has seen me join the Riley Institute at Furman as a Research Associate in May of this year. The United Way of Greenville County received a \$3 million Social Innovation Fund (SIF) federal grant through the Corporation for National and Community Service.

United Way is distributing these funds to five area nonprofits working to keep middle school students in the White Horse Community engaged in school so that they will be on track graduate from high school. I have been working with a team of researchers in Riley's Center for Education Policy to design rigorous evaluations of the dropout prevention programs these nonprofits are implementing.

On a personal note, I got married last September to Jonathan Cote, another Furman alum, and we bought a house in Piedmont, SC. Since the purchase, our lives have been become one long-running episode of This Old House. We both are becoming adept at plumbing, stair-building, woodcutting, and all those other skills new homeowners learn. Jonathan is enjoying his job as an Associate at Wyche law firm, and we are looking forward to what this next year has to offer!

## 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 sociology department for those purposes. No amount is too small. Thanks! Make your donation online at [alumni.furman.edu/give](http://alumni.furman.edu/give) or mail to Furman University Office of Development 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613 Fund ID:18230