Hello Again,

It’s another busy Fall semester here in the Department, and we have a lot to be excited about. Our new full-time faculty member in Political Science, Dr. Michael E. Aleprete, has joined us and is teaching courses in international politics, comparative politics, and research methods. In Sociology, Dr. Kitzerow is in Oxford for the semester, and Dr. Park will be on sabbatical next semester. We have hired Dr. Danielle Ficco for the whole year to fill in for these (well-earned!) absences.

The faculty have been busy professionally, as usual, publishing articles, giving papers, attending conferences. Dr. Smithey is involved in two projects with Department colleagues — with Dr. Kitzerow on obituaries and Dr. Rhoads on privacy. Drs. Kitzerow and Tomlinson continue their work on gender discrimination in the legal profession, and that is only the beginning. We are also working hard on our clusters, Capstones, and major courses, and I will be offering a new course in Environmental Politics and Policy, as part of work towards a new Environmental Studies minor on campus. And, of course, we have just finished our earliest Mock Convention ever. Dr. Rhoads is to be congratulated on putting on such a successful event, which featured Mr. Bill Press as our speaker and which chose the unique ticket of John Edwards and Stephen Colbert for President and Vice-President. You can find pictures, video, and other material from the Convention on the College’s website.

We are well on our way to another productive year. So are our alumni. Recent graduates are working in law schools, master’s, and Ph.D. programs, working in interest groups, the media, and think tanks in Washington, working in business, and serving Americans in a variety of ways. We look forward to hearing from you....and make sure you thank Deb Sanchez for pulling together this newsletter.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or just want to re-establish contact, feel free to call or write any one of us. For the record, my office phone is 724-946-7304, the department office number is 724-946-7253, and my e-mail address is cohenes@westminster.edu.

Edward S. Cohen
Chair, PSS
The 18th Westminster Mock Convention was held November 7-8, 2007. Sen. John Edwards was nominated for President on the 3rd ballot. He defeated Sen. Barack Obama 204-198. Edwards led after the first two ballots, but did not receive either a 2/3rds majority on the first ballot, or a majority on the second ballot. After the second ballot, the Campaign Manager for Sen. Hillary Clinton went to the podium and released her delegates, urging them to support Sen. Obama.

The Vice-Presidential Nomination went to television personality Stephen Colbert, who recently aborted his own presidential run.

The Convention began with a powerful Keynote Address given by television and radio pundit, Bill Press.

On the issues, the delegates endorsed a withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, beginning immediately, and to be completed by December 31, 2008. The delegates also endorsed a resolution calling on the national government to recognize civil unions for same-sex couples. Delegates passed a resolution mandating that all automobiles/SUV's manufactured in 2011 and beyond in the US, must average, at minimum, 35 miles per gallon. The delegates defeated a resolution that would have granted amnesty to all undocumented aliens.

Faculty Advisor, James C. Rhoads said, "the 2007 Convention exceeded my expectations. It began with a great Keynote Address from Bill Press, and continued with a serious debate on important issues, and ended with students choosing candidates for President and Vice-President. I thought the student and faculty delegates did a great job, and I think this experience helps to make politics more accessible to our students. The students showed great enthusiasm and created an atmosphere that made the Convention a lot of fun."

Rhoads went on to say, "I am also very proud of the 16 students who planned and executed the Convention, led by our Executive Chair, Steven Ruperto. This group faced more challenges than any before them, with the exception of those who pioneered the Convention in 1936. The Committee put the Convention together in little more than 2 months and did an outstanding job. Next semester this same group of students will begin the process of laying the foundation for Convention 2011."
James C. Rhoads and Shannon I. Smithey presented, "Attitudes Toward Privacy and Security Five Years After 9/11" at the annual meeting of The International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity. The meeting was held October 4-6, 2007 at the National Library of Medicine (part of the National Institute of Health) in Bethesda, Maryland.

The paper sought to explore more deeply attitudes concerning the long-standing tension between security and privacy, especially in this age of terrorism. Rhoads and Smithey utilized Q Methodology to reveal the structure of these attitudes. Participants in the study rank-ordered a set of statements drawn from conversation on the security-privacy debate. The data were then correlated and factor-analyzed and revealed three distinct viewpoints -- one group who saw this tension in partisan terms, another separate group who were resigned to the notion that the government must be granted some additional police powers, though they were skeptical of the government. A third separate group was quite willing to allow the government additional police powers, and sacrifice civil liberties to counter the threat of terrorism. Q Methodology permitted a fuller understanding of such attitudes, which would have been obscured by the use of more conventional survey research techniques.

The paper is now being considered for publication and is the beginning of a larger research project. Dr. Rhoads and Dr. Smithey are planning follow-up studies.

- James C. Rhoads has been appointed to the Editorial Board of The Journal of Human Subjectivity.

What is...the Intercultural Major?

If you enjoy language study and learning about the history and culture of other countries, check out the Intercultural Studies Major here at Westminster. Students combine intensive study of French or Spanish language and cultural regions, History courses focused on Europe or Latin America (and sometimes Africa) and Sociology courses that explore ethnic relations and cultural anthropology to become specialists in their region of choice or of international issues more broadly.

Recent graduates in this major have gone on to positions in the offices of international students and programs at liberal arts colleges and an art institute, as a student of immigration law in law school, as a medical social worker, and as the Chair of the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C. Graduates emphasize how the cultural knowledge and sensitivity that they acquired in the major, the connections that they made across disciplines and the accompanying language skills have assisted them in their chosen careers.

For more information, contact Dr. Park at x7251 or kpark@westminster.edu

Why Choose the Intercultural Major?

I chose to double major in elementary education and intercultural studies because it will give me the opportunity to learn from other cultures around me, so as to provide those I will teach with a quality and educated learning experience. I also believe it is important to go beyond one’s own experiences to know about the beliefs, values, and traditions which fabricate societies and diversify one culture from another. Emileigh Drylie, Sophomore, Elementary Education & Intercultural Studies Major

The Journal of Human Subjectivity is an English-language journal sponsored by the Korean Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity. Rhoads is also a member of the Editorial Board for Operant Subjectivity.
2007 has been a very good year! In the Spring semester of 2007, I was recognized by Carlow University for implementing their first solely online course in the core curriculum – *Introduction to Women’s Studies*. These pioneering efforts aside, I was somewhat busy throughout the Spring and early Summer with a little pet project entitled “Women Stepping Out: Intersections of Welfare Policy, Work and Abuse.” I am proud to report that I successfully defended the dissertation and earned a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh.

I have (nearly) survived my first semester of teaching here at Westminster College. I am looking forward to teaching *Principles of Sociology* again in the Spring 2008. I will also be teaching *Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective and Family Violence*. I am very interested in gender issues, so these two classes should be especially enjoyable to teach (and hopefully for my students to attend!) In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I am revising one of my dissertation chapters on women and abuse. I hope to transform this chapter into an article that will make its way through the submission process at *Violence Against Women*.

I would be remiss if I did not mention a few of my proudest moments in my most taxing job. My daughter Alex (7) earned straight A’s this Fall. My daughter Taylor (5) can read *The Three Little Fish and the Big Bad Shark* all by herself. Finally, my son Zachary, who just turned two, has learned to say “shake your booty” to anyone willing to listen.

Below: Dr. Ficco with her daughters

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A Model United Nations student organization has been formed here at Westminster. Led by international politics majors Jelena Gerga and Meredith Smith, the group plans to hold events on campus as well as compete in regional and national Model UN competitions. Model UN received official recognition from the College this fall. Professor Aleprete serves as the group’s faculty advisor.

With support from the Drinko Center and the Department of Political Science & Sociology, the group plans on attending their first competition this February, when they will be going to Mid-Western regional Model United Nations Conference to be held in St. Louis Missouri. Model UN’s a great way to learn about global affairs while sharpening your debate skills. The group is open to all Westminster students, so if you are interested please contact Meredith, Jelena or Professor Aleprete.
How I Spent My Summer Vacation  Kristin Park

Last summer, Dr. Kristin Park received a Westminster Faculty Development Award to participate in an International Faculty Development Seminar with the Council on International Educational Exchange. She spent 8 days in Nicaragua with faculty from other U.S. colleges and universities learning about the culture, politics and economics of contemporary Nicaragua. The country is rather distinctive within Latin America in having experienced a socialist revolution in 1979 and a socialist elected government for the second half of the 1980’s, both of which were strongly opposed by the U.S. government. Today, the country is the second poorest in the Western hemisphere, with 80% of the population living on less than $2 a day.

During the mornings the group listened to Nicaraguan academics and policymakers discuss topics including “The Sandinista Revolution and its Legacy,” “The Contra War and its Impact on Nicaraguan Society,” including a roundtable with former combatants discussing their work at reconciliation; “Religion in Nicaragua;” and “Poverty and Development.”

Site visits within the country included trips to historical and political monuments, performances of traditional music and dance, an arts and crafts market, and a boat trip around the islands near Granada. In addition, Dr. Park met with Kristin Allen, a 2007 Westminster graduate who was in the country working for a real estate development company and interning in a rural school.

Dr. Park is applying her knowledge to her SOC 250: Social Theory class. She also is developing a Nicaraguan case study for a workshop and workbook titled “Internationalizing the Curriculum.” The workshop is geared to helping college social science instructors incorporate more international content into their courses.

Smithey’s Summer  Shannon Smithey

Prof. Shannon Smithey traveled to the annual convention of the Law and Society Association in Berlin, Germany, this July. There she delivered a paper entitled “Judging Democracy: How Constitutional Courts Influence Democratic Development in Eastern Europe.” Her research analyzes the role that constitutional courts have played in promoting democracy in Eastern Europe since the early 1990s. As these countries emerged from communist control, almost all of them included powerful high courts in their new constitutions. Many commentators expressed concern that empowering judges would hinder the development of democracy. Smithey’s research indicates, to the contrary, that there is a positive relationship between the exercise of judicial power and democratic development--democracy has established the firmest hold in those Eastern European countries that have the most active courts. Courts help inspire greater public trust in democratic institutions by enforcing constitutional rules and ensuring a degree of compliance with the rule of law.

Student Presents Research

Kristin Nelson, a Westminster College senior sociology-criminal justice and English major, presented her capstone research Oct. 27 at a meeting of the Pennsylvania Sociological Society.

“The project, The Decline of Social Connectivity Related to Stress, Depression, Isolation, and Suicide in College Students, focuses on a social problem that needs much research and possible solutions,” Nelson said.

Kristin’s participation was funded by an Undergraduate Research Grant from the Drinko Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The research is supervised by Dr. Virginia Tomlinson, Westminster associate professor of sociology, and Dr. Kristin Park, Westminster associate professor of sociology, who asked Nelson to make the presentation.

Nelson stated, “The conference was a good experience because I was able to present my research and to see other undergraduate research projects. It was beneficial to be exposed to different presentation methods and styles. I was very impressed with the presentation by Dr. Ross Koppel of the University of Pennsylvania, whose work in medical sociology is inspiring. I am honored to represent Westminster's Sociology Department at the conference.”
I usually teach Deviance and Sociology of Gender on campus in the fall but this year I’m spending the fall term at Oxford. It’s wonderful! I’m lucky enough to have a very companionable colleague, Dr. Deborah Mitchell of the English Department, a small apartment 10 minutes from our classroom, and all of Oxford to explore. One of the bonuses is that we have a week’s break in October when all of us traveled. I made it to London and Paris with my husband who was visiting but our students traveled much more extensively, to Rome and Florence and Paris and Amsterdam and other exciting places.

Our time is going all too quickly. I’m about to give my second exam in Gender and we’ve begun the study of England’s National Health Service in Medical Sociology. The Gender course is part of a cluster with Dr. Mitchell’s film adaptation course, one that we’ve taught a number of times connected to the Suffragette movement of the early 1900’s.

On a more social note, we’ve also had several wine and cheese (and soft drink) parties where 9 of the students at a time come to our flats. It’s been a good way to get to know the students better. On Thanksgiving, we’re having (at Westminster’s expense) a Thanksgiving dinner at the Mitre with turkey and gravy and stuffing. Then, all too quickly, it will be time for final exams and our return on December 10th.

I am extremely glad I chose to do this, even on cold foggy mornings when I’m walking to class. Having a classroom next to the Thames, hearing from students in Monday’s class who spent the weekend in Ireland, and walking through Oxford appreciating the beauty and age of the buildings that surround me all make this an unforgettable time in my life. I hope many of you reading this, students and faculty, will think about doing this program.