Sophomore Early Research Program 2017-2018
Social Science Faculty Projects

Social Sciences: Projects in Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Political Science/Middle Eastern Studies, Sociology, and Women’s and Gender Studies/WCW

Anthropology

Deborah Matzner
*Anthropology of the Senses and Sound Art*

This project involves library and ethnographic research into cultures of the senses, particularly focusing on sound. Based on the insight that sensory experience is culturally patterned, I am launching two research projects on sonic practice. One focuses on philosophies and phenomenologies of sound in the ASMR community. They other explores sound art, particularly among South Asian artists, as an arena in which creative work is being done to manipulate and comment upon the social and physical operation of sound. The student will help me to find relevant scholarship on these phenomena, as well as identifying the artists and communities of practitioners engaged in them.

Environmental Studies

Beth DeSombre
*Fisheries/Shipping/Policy Evolution*

I anticipate working on three different projects (all interdisciplinary) across the 2017-8 academic year.

1) US Policy Towards International Fishery Negotiations -- analyzes the reasons for the positions the US takes in international regulation of ocean fisheries; 2) International shipping regulation -- looks at how global regulation on protecting against oil spills emerged and what it tells us about current efforts to create air pollution regulation on ships; 3) Post-policy system evolution -- examines how regulation, once adopted, sets up systemic changes that frequently make policies easier and cheaper to implement than initially predicted. General social science background necessary; student will gain archival and data analysis skills, along with working on reviews of the relevant academic literature.
Jay Turner

*When is bigger better for the environment?*

Often progressive environmental reform is associated with small-scale, local enterprise and activities: local stores, small farms, and tiny cars, etc. I am working on a project that makes the case that in many instances, large scale activities yield under-recognized environmental gains through improvements in investment and efficiency, such as large data centers, metal smelting facilities, and, even, cities. I am looking for a student to do preliminary research on case studies for this project.

**Political Science/Middle Eastern Studies**

Nadya Hajj

*After the Last Frontier: Burial Politics in Refugee Camps*

In *The Earth is Closing on Us*, the famed Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, queries, "Where should we go after the last frontiers? Where should the birds fly after the last sky?" After their life ends on the refugee frontier, where does the body of an everyday Palestinian that died a quotidian death go? What happens to their bodies' and how does a Palestinian refugee family negotiate the micro-politics of refugee burial? For most refugees it is a political quagmire to find a proper burial spot and give sanctuary to the dead when host countries deny their individual freedoms and are reluctant to offer cemetery plots for non-nationals. Burying their dead is testimony to the refugee struggle against arbitrary power and the political resilience of their community.

I will need a student worker that has background in historical and comparative case analysis. The student will need to do a careful job of cataloging how other (non-Palestinian) refugee and displaced migrant communities around the world have buried their dead. Based on how other groups manage the micropolitics of burial, I hope the student will help me devise a model of burial practices.

**Sociology**

Peggy Levitt

*Transnational Social Protection*

Social welfare has long been considered something that states provide to their citizens. Yet today 220 million people live in a country in which they do not hold citizenship. How are people on the move protected and provided for in the contemporary global context? Have institutional sources of social welfare begun to cross borders to meet the needs of individuals who live transnational lives? One piece of this puzzle is how workers are protected across borders and
the extent to which unions in different countries work together. The student who works with me will (a) do a thorough literature search on what has been written on transnational labor rights, (b) summarize these materials and help me identify the missing pieces that need further study, and (c) to identify best practices. She will learn how to work effectively with literary databases, master bibliographic management programs, write a strong literature review, and write a research proposal.

Markella Rutherford
*Families out on a Limb: Parenting in the Neoliberal State*

This project analyzes accounts of "failed parenting" in the commercial media, social media, and courts, paying particular attention to the ways that race, class, and gender shape issue framing around ideas of responsibility and support. A student assistant will participate in data collection and qualitative content analysis. Methodological skills to build and practice include purposive sampling, bibliographic research, qualitative data management and coding using Atlas.ti software.

**Women's and Gender Studies & Wellesley Centers for Women**

Nancy Marshall
*Employment, Working Conditions and Health among Immigrant Workers*

I am working on a project on immigrant workers, working conditions and health. The student will work with me on identifying the latest research, as well as identifying national and local organizations working on the rights of immigrant workers. The student will develop a familiarity with both quantitative and qualitative research methods, from reviewing existing research, as well as knowledge of the research on working conditions and health among immigrant workers. She will draw on this knowledge to develop her own research project on immigrant workers, under my mentorship. This research could involve interviews with staff in local or national organizations, the review and analysis of national or local databases on immigrant workers, or qualitative research with individual workers, depending on the student's interests and skills. The student should have some coursework in the social sciences, an interest in the topic and in learning to conduct research, and experience using one or more online library databases (course-related is fine). The student will present the results of her research at the Ruhlman Conference in 2018.