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Dickinson Launches Three Mile Island Website on the 25th Anniversary of the Nuclear Accident

Fall/Winter 2003

By Elizabeth Scott '04

The Three Mile Island webpage (<http://www.threemileisland.org/>) is an amazing new resource that was recently launched by the Dickinson Community Studies Center. The website acts as a virtual museum and resource center containing overviews of the incident and its place in time, as well as primary historical documents and interviews from the period. The site is a multimedia experience, containing original audio, typed documents and interviews, and related images.

According to Lonna Malsheimer, the Director of the Community Studies Center, the site was developed as a way to make the interviews conducted by Dickinson College in 1979 available for scholarly use. Additionally, they included information that is not available from other sources. In contrast to the academic portion of the site, a virtual museum was included to attract those interested in TMI who had little background knowledge. All of this was part of a larger project designed to add the social effects of TMI to the current discussions on the future of nuclear energy.

Students, working for the Community Studies Center, spent over 18 months digitizing and proofing interviews that were originally transcribed in 1979. Preservation copies of all the taped interviews were created from the original masters, which are currently stored in the Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections. Students used these copies to insure the accuracy of every transcript before they were

included on the website. Malsheimer worked with Say Productions, a web design firm, to create the structure of the site and with the help of John Luetzelschwab, Professor Emeritus of Physics and Jim Gerencser, Special Archives Librarian, developed the content. Since its inception, the site has had an average of 9000 requests per day with over 175,000 total requests. Yet, this website is far from finished. Of the 400 interviews conducted in Carlisle in 1979 only 70 have been made available. The site is a living and evolving website that will continue to be updated and grow well into the future.



Independent film highlights anniversary events

As part of the series of events honoring the 25th anniversary of Three Mile Island, the movie "Containment: Life after Three Mile Island" was shown on Tuesday, March 23. Filmmakers Nick Poppy, who grew up in central Pennsylvania and was evacuated with his family during the incident, and Chris Boebel began their project in 1998 in hopes of releasing it by the 20th Anniversary. However, it turned into a much longer project as the filmmakers realized the depth of emotion being expressed on the 20th Anniversary of the incident. Consequently, the project changed from one about the accident at

Three Mile Island becomes historic site: On March 28, 1979 and for several days thereafter ..as a result of technical malfunctions and human error.. Three Mile Island's Unit 2 Nuclear Generating Station was the scene of the nation's worst commercial nuclear accident. Radiation was released, a part of the nuclear core was damaged, and thousands of residents evacuated the area. Events here would cause basic changes throughout the world's nuclear power industry.

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TMI to a film about the effects of the nuclear accident on local residents.

“Containment” is a one hour documentary that explores the legacy of TMI and the long-term effects on the local residents of Middletown, Pennsylvania. Interviews and archival sources are woven together to inspect the rise of anti-nuclear activism, psychological consequences and health effects. The film exposes the tensions and divisions that continue to run through Middletown, while focusing on the memory of the 1979 nuclear accident.

As part of Tuesday's event, Boebel and Poppy were available after the film to answer questions and explain their project. They discussed the process of making an oral history documentary, selecting willing storytellers and described the challenges of discussing traumatic events. Christine Walley, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Comparative Media Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, added her perspective about how the issues discussed by the citizens of Middletown could be part of a broader societal conversation.

Three Mile Island after 25 Years: Research Lessons Learned

A lecture featuring speakers John Schorr, Ray Goldsteen and Karen Goldsteen, was held on March 25. The speakers were sociological and medical researchers who worked in the Goldsboro and Newbury Township areas from 1979 through 1987 after the nuclear plant accident in Middletown. The initial research completed by Ray and Karen was conducted for a Presidential Commission. Later Ray and Karen joined with John Schorr and continued their independent research which led to the book *Demanding Democracy After Three Mile Island*.



Action!: Film makers Nick Poppy and Chris Boebel shoot at TMI.

Schorr, Goldsteen and Goldsteen recalled for the audience the situations, methodologies and conclusions that surrounded their work. For Ray and Karen the work was a family affair. Interviews were taped and surveys mailed all from around their kitchen table, and when Karen closed the books on their first project, she gave birth that night. When the three began working together, they developed a triangular approach to their study and conducted telephone surveys, mail surveys and interviews. Through their work they discovered that the people in the communities that surround TMI began to greatly disfavor the nuclear plant and in turn the government officials that supported it. The community also distrusted the government and health officials, because they ignored the problems and maintained the opinion that no damage had been done.

Their research came to an end when the nuclear reactor at TMI was

reopened. When plans of reopening TMI were announced, people claimed 'they can't do this to us, it's America.' The amount of satisfaction or faith in the democratic process dropped substantially in the area as a direct result of the Three Mile Island accident. Schorr, Goldsteen, and Goldsteen concluded in their book that a true democratic system would allow self-determination of health risks that affect communities, something that was not achieved in Middletown, PA.

Their book was recently used in Professor Kim Lacy Rogers' Oral History class in combination with other readings and projects that centered around the 25th anniversary of the Three Mile Island incident. From this course new interviews were completed and added to the collection of interviews conducted at the college in 1979 and will be accessible at the Three Mile Island website.

Students Seize the Opportunity to Learn First Hand About Cuban Economy and Culture

By Sarah Hiller '06

In the late afternoon on January 3, 2004, a group of fifteen Dickinson students stepped off a plane at José Martí airport in Havana, Cuba. They spent two weeks experiencing Cuban life and culture and exploring the capital and some of the surrounding countryside and beaches with Professors Sinan Koont (Economics) and Susan Rose (Sociology) for the class they took spring semester, Cuban Society and Economy Today.

The students attended lectures in U.S.-Cuban relations, Cuban History, Healthcare and the Lives of Cuban Women, Cuban Culture, and Sustainable Development at the historic University of Havana. In Havana, they toured landmarks in Old Havana and went to the Museum of the Revolution, La Cabaña fortress, and the Plaza of the Revolution, all while learning about the history of Cuba and life since the Revolution in 1959. They even attended a performance of the

National Ballet of Cuba.

As part of the program with the University of Havana, the students went on field trips to a functioning model agrarian community called Las Terrazas in the countryside, where they were able to visit an elementary school and talk to the children and teachers. Students learned that the government takes a special interest in talented students and provides supplemental education in a whole spectrum of activities such as music, art, and sports. They also visited a veterinary clinic and an *organipónico*, or organic garden, where much of the food for urban areas is produced. Dickinsonians toured the Latin American Medical Science school, where over 7000 medical students from poor regions in Africa and the Americas are taught free of charge and are expected to return to their own countries where they will provide much needed medical services.

In their free time, students wandered along the Malecón by the ocean, and through Old Havana and the borough of Vedado. They interacted with Cubans from all parts of society, hearing different perspectives of Cuban life. In addition, they attended different musical performances and centers for the fine arts, such as the Taller Experimental de Grafica, where they were able to see and discuss the work of several graphic artists. At the Centro Pablo de la Torriente Brau, they met and talked with poet and filmmaker, Victor Casaus, and with journalist Hedelberto Lopez Blanch, who discussed his interviews with Cuban immigrants in south Florida and New Jersey. The students also learned about music and different afro-Cuban religions in their exploration of Havana. They were impressed by the American cars from the 1950s, and were able to visit the home of Ernest Hemingway in the hills above Havana. Although their stay was brief, they



Cuban schoolboys, dressed in their formal school uniforms.

came away with a valuable experience and impressions of Cuba that they will never forget.

The Cuban Revolution Lives On

By Alison Egic '04

Through the taxi window, I see children line up along the Malécon, specks of blue and maroon among the huge range of skin shades. The children in school uniforms await Fidel Castro who is rumored to make an appearance on this day. Despite a recent claim by an American newspaper to the failing health of Cuba's 45 year-long leader, most Cubans seem to think Castro and Cuba's socialist revolution are far from bed-ridden. "*La revolucion*," rather, is "*in cada barrio*," as the writing on the cement walls around Havana's quarters indicates. The revolution is a lived experience, a feeling of social transformation.

Castro's revolution has given Cubans a feeling of equality and dignity. Cubans feel entitled to a healthy life in which one may develop to one's full potential. Concretely, the value placed on human dignity is evident when examining achievements within the realm of social welfare prior to and following the revolution:



The well-known Cuban Malécon as seen from the Hotel Nacional.

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Organic urban gardens provide a new source of food for a self-sustaining Cuban population which is unable to import goods from the United States cost effectively.

“Infant mortality rate dropped from 60 per 1,000 live births in children under one year of age in 1959 to 7.2 in 1998. Life expectancy increased in those same years from 62.6 to 76.1. The number of people per physicians descended from 1,076 in 1959 to 183 in 1996. The illiteracy rate went down from 23.6% in 1953 to 1.9% in 1981 and social security services that covered only 53% of the population in 1958 had reached 100%.”

Behind these dry, albeit impressive, statistics are the real improvements in people's lives and phenomenal programs instituted in times of hardship. Cuba's severe economic crisis following the fall of the Soviet Bloc has been termed the “special period” because it created immense problems for the island. Exacerbated by a tightening of the U.S. blockade with the Cuban Democracy Act (Torricelli Law), the Special Period caused a sharp decline in the standard of living for many Cubans. In response to a disease called neuritis, resulting from the decreased amounts and quality of available food at the end of the 1980s, the government produced and distributed vitamins free of charge. It is programs like these, which seem less rare in an America where health interests are dominated

by profit, which prove the strong revolutionary commitment to social welfare.

It seems America is in much the same *balcero* in which Cuba found itself in the former part of the 20th century—wealth resides in a handful of millionaires whose interests are degrading the human dignity of millions of people working two jobs, lacking health care, paying immense sums for education, and feeling like this is normal. In Cuba, this is not normal, despite the island being surrounded by numerous Latin American realities where poverty, state-sponsored violence, poor health, and illiteracy are the norm. Human dignity and social welfare remain at the core of the Cuban imagination. Voices of proud people in the streets echo, “Our country may be poor, but no child goes to bed hungry. All children receive basic education up to ninth grade. Education is free. One doctor serves only 200 people. Infant mortality rates are among the lowest in Latin America.” These are statistics that mean something to the Cuban people—the revolution has in fact been a heartfelt social transformation.

This revolution did not begin as a communist, or even socialist, mission. Cubans maintain it was initially nationalist, agrarian, and democratic in nature. So why didn't the United States

see it as such? Perhaps because in 1959, at the time of the first agrarian reform law, 13 U.S. companies owned 37.4% of the land dedicated to sugar cane and American capitol owned 22% of the sugar mills which Castro nationalized. This, to revolutionary Cubans, was the final step in claiming an independence incomplete in 1902. How was this an agrarian revolution? Foremost, the guerilla army was ultimately a peasant army stemming from revolutionary ideals that aimed to correct the economic and geographic disparity between urban wealth and rural poverty.

The revolution does indeed live on for those who can conjure up images of bloody massacres initiated by Batista in the first half of the 20th century; for those who traveled and fought with Fidel in the Sierra Maestra; for those who witnessed the existence of an elite which owned a majority of land and wealth. But sustaining the revolution is more questionable for Cuba's younger generation— for those children lined up along the Malécon. As the economy shifts with the influx of dollars into Cuban markets, social differentiation is on the rise. Professors, doctors, and lawyers make less money than hotel housekeepers, with the former earning pesos (with which one cannot buy basic things like cleaning supplies, hygiene products, or milk) and the latter earning dollars. The influx of tourists also alerts many Cubans to greater access to wealth in Europe and North America. For those who don't know what pre-revolutionary



Dickinson students Chris Neary, Greg Lott, Alfredo Axtmayer talk with Cuban journalist, Hedelberto Lopez Blanch.

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Cuba looked and felt like, this can seem highly unjust. As the island slowly climbs out of the economic crisis of the Special Period (by promoting tourism and foreign joint ventures), many Cubans wish most that U.S. aggression would end. It is important for us, especially us as Americans, to think about the potential improvement in Cuban people's livelihoods with normalized relations between the two countries. It should not be our place to prohibit a socially transformative revolution from continuing.

Community Studies Center to Support Watershed-Based Integrated Field Semesters

By Mara Waldhorn '06 and Professor Candie Wilderman

The Environmental Studies Department at Dickinson College has recently been rewarded a \$459,615 grant by the Henry Luce Foundation to engage students in a single integrated course for the equivalent of a student's entire four-course load, combining classroom activities, community-based fieldwork research, independent study, and extensive travel and immersion in two comparative watershed regions: the Chesapeake Bay and the lower Mississippi River basin. The grant is over a 5-year period.

Some of the goals of this Dickinson program are to explore how humans and natural resources are interconnected; to provide background knowledge regarding the techniques used for both quantitative and qualitative research methodology; and to expose students to the cultural contexts in which environmental problems are created and in which solutions are conceived. As the



ALLARM students partake in stream sampling as part of the ongoing watershed research project.

proposal for this watershed-based integrated field semester points out, the program strives to: "expand the boundaries of the college community by actively engaging students and faculty in meaningful, long-term community projects with people who, by virtue of their diverse experiences, have much to teach them."

The Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM), a project of the Environmental Studies program currently provides technical and programmatic support for community groups throughout the state of PA, who are working towards assessment, protection, and restoration of streams. A large part of the new Watershed-Based project will be to closely collaborate with communities with which ALLARM has developed relationships, in order to provide study and research opportunities for students, both as part of the integrated field semester, and for ongoing independent research projects.

In addition to ALLARM's support, The Dickinson College Community Studies Center (CSC) will serve as a repository for any research and interviews conducted during the Environmental Studies program.

Similar fieldwork oriented initiatives which the CSC has supported have included research through the Dickinson College Mosaic program in: Steelton, Pennsylvania, Patagonia, Argentina, Havana, Cuba, and transnational work between Peribán de Ramos Michoacán, Mexico and Adams County, Pennsylvania.

The Watershed-Based Integrated Field Semesters at Dickinson are designed to give undergraduate students the rare opportunity to take part in an intense and important project which will advance community-based watershed and environmental research.



Students study and research the Chesapeake Bay.

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Shaw Lecture Welcomes Author, Wayne Brekhus

By Emily Bunano '04

On Thursday, April 8th, 2004, Wayne Brekhus was welcomed to Dickinson to give the annual Shaw Lecture. Brekhus is a celebrated author and sociologist and focused on gay culture and identity in his lecture. Brekhus has performed fieldwork on gay identity, specifically in suburbia America, and discussed how his findings relate to ideologies as well as their reflection of identity theories.

During the 1990's, Brekhus conducted about 30 interviews with gay men in suburbia New Jersey. His findings revealed two main identities among the gay suburban community; marked identity and unmarked identity. Brekhus explained that a marked identity represented a sexual identity, while an unmarked identity was a regional one.

Once two main identities were established, Brekhus could then begin to analyze gay suburbia using these as guidelines. Brekhus discussed that his findings revealed three different identities; identity lifestylers, identity commuters, and identity integrators.

Identity lifestylers are represented by what he would call the peacock identity. The suburban gays that fall under this identity live a lifestyle of a 100% gay identity in which their gayness is always apparent. The identity commuter is the chameleon, whose gay identity reflects their surrounding. Chameleon gays will travel to the city from the suburb in order to express their gayness. The identity integrator, which is represented by the centaur, is the suburban gay who neither hides their gay identity nor reveals it. These centaurs tend to be "All American," in that they promote social change. The integrators, in a way, are creating an identity; they represent a conspicuous straight male by day, but are not so



WAYNE H. BREKHUS

2004 SHAW LECTURER

PEACOCKS

CHAMELEONS

CENTAURS

GAY SUBURBIA AND THE GRAMMAR OF SOCIAL IDENTITY



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conspicuous by night.

In American society today, there are so many stereotypes about gays, especially in suburban America. Wayne Brekhus performs research on these suburban gays and then shares his findings, in attempts to extinguish such common and falsely exploited stereotypes among American society. The Dickinson community strongly supports Wayne Brekhus and truly appreciates his generosity in sharing his findings and theories on this subject.

Wayne Brekhus is the author of the book, *Peacocks, Chameleons, & Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity*, in which the theories briefly explained in this article are elaborated on. Brekhus is currently an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Missouri, and received his doctoral degree from Rutgers University.

The Shaw Lecture was established in memory of Donald "Bud" Shaw, a graduate of Dickinson's Department of American Studies. The department received the endowment following Shaw's death from the AIDS virus, with the request that it be used to provide educational programming. Annual lectures highlight the most

outstanding scholars in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender studies.

Dickinson at ESS: A Big Success!

By Julie Winterich

Dickinson College was well-represented at the 74th annual meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society in New York, February 19-22, with four professors and six students participating in a variety of paper panels and a teaching workshop. Assistant Sociology professors Pauline Cullen and Ashley Finley organized a student paper session, "Comparative Perspectives: Gender, Race, Ethnicity," based on original research that was conducted in the Fall in the Global Mosaic Project. Lisa M. Hohl, a senior sociology and Spanish major, presented her paper, "Comparative Perspectives: Mexican Migrant Workers," and Johna Boulafentis, a senior anthropology major, presented her paper: "Greek Immigrants as Transnationalists."

Assistant Women's Studies professor, Julie Winterich, organized a student paper session, "Women and the Body: Agency, Resistance, and Transformation," based on original research that was conducted in the fall in her Women's Studies senior seminar. The following students participated in this panel: Alison Egic, a senior anthropology and women's studies major, presented "Childbirth Behind Bars: Prison Control and Medical Advocacy: When Women are 'Docile Bodies,'" Emily Furthman, a senior psychology and women's studies major, presented "Social Trauma and the Body: Why Adolescent Girls Self-Cut," Sara Schertenlieb, a senior sociology major, presented "Women, Ink, and Agency: Women's Experiences with Tattoos," and Lindsey Wahlquist-Bontecou, a senior Spanish and women's studies major, presented "A Corporeal Cultural

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Map: The Female Body and Activist Literature in Latin America.”

Professor Cullen presented her own research, “European Union Social NGOs: Participatory Democracy, ‘Organized Civil Society’ and the Democratization of EU Governance,” as did Professor Finley, “Age and Household Headship: The Lingering Impacts of Occupational Disadvantage for Mexican Women.” Finally, Professors Cullen and Rose lead a professional workshop on teaching, “Teaching as a Calling: Developing the Materials, Skills and Confidence to be a Master Teacher.” The students and professors gave participants a range of Dickinson’s exciting and original research as well as insights on developing innovative teaching programs!

A Spotlight on the Ethnographic Work of Professor Cotten Seiler

By Mara Waldhorn ‘06

Ethnography, as Dickinson Professor Cotton Seiler puts it, is “the study of communities”. It is a valid tool, which if implemented correctly by experts or even novice undergraduate students can be used to conduct rich research of people’s lives, cultures, and homes. Stepping outside of the classroom to develop a better understanding of how people live greatly contributes to furthering the spectrum of Social Science throughout the world.

American Studies Professor Cotton Seiler grew up in Louisville, Kentucky and attended Northwestern University for undergraduate study, followed by the University of Kansas to pursue graduate work. While earning his doctorate degree, Seiler taught at the University of Kansas, and for the past two years has been teaching at Dickinson.



ESS participants: (left to right, front row) Julie Winterich, Emily Furthman, Sara Schertenlieb, Johana Boulafentis, Lindsay Wahlquist-Bontecou. (Back row) Ashley Finley, Pauline Cullen, Alison Egic, Susan Rose, and Lisa Hohl.

He became interested in ethnography while working on his doctorate degree. One of Seiler’s professors had been taught by the well known American Studies scholar, Janice Radway, author of the book *Reading Romance*. Radway conducted an ethnographic study regarding a group of women and the romance novel. She believed that though such American novels as *Moby Dick* have received critical acclaim, they are not necessarily the types of novels which the average American chooses to read. Throughout her fieldwork, Radway strives to understand and get to know people on a personal level, in order to generate theories and ideas about *why* America is the way it is. Seiler acquired his understanding of ethnography by learning Radway’s methods from a third generation perspective.

As a graduate student, Seiler adopted the fieldwork model that one of his mentors had used, and he conducted an in depth study of the popular music scene in his hometown of Louisville, KY. After immersing himself in the music realm of Louisville, Seiler was able to generate theories and ideas regarding musicians in KY; the types of music they preferred to play; and the analysis of different musical styles and genres which came out of the popular music scene there.

Seiler now teaches the 302 Fieldwork Methods course, which is offered by the American Studies

Department at Dickinson College. He explains that the aim of his course is “to get students to become practitioners”. Seiler thus stresses to his students the importance of going out into the Dickinson and Carlisle communities (as well as surrounding Pennsylvania areas) and becoming observers and participants in new cultural situations. He discusses that while one may begin their fieldwork having had certain hypotheses about what they may find, a good ethnographer will always be proven wrong regarding primary assumptions at least once in his or her experience.

One goal of the 302 fieldwork course is to create a closer relationship between students and the Carlisle community. Some of the projects, which Seiler’s ethnography students have completed, include a study of Cumberland County Planned Parenthood, the Carlisle Emergency Shelter and the evangelical community on Dickinson’s campus. Seiler says that he wishes his affiliation with Community Studies at Dickinson was greater, but that he is waiting for an appropriate area of focus in which he feels he will be able to strongly contribute.



Professor Cotten Seiler in his office.



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Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013
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