

One department, two Locations: Highlighting WSU Vancouver



More than 3,000 of WSU's nearly 30,000 students are at WSU Vancouver, making WSU the only four-year research university in Southwest Washington. Sociology has been part of WSU Vancouver since the campus was created by the state legislature in 1989. The sociology faculty in Vancouver include Clay Mosher, Alair MacLean, Katrina Leupp, and Amy Wharton, who is also director of Arts and Sciences on the Vancouver campus.

"Two campuses, one department" is an accurate description of the Sociology program at Washington State University. Supported by a strong telecommunications system and occasional in-person visits to Pullman, all WSU Vancouver faculty are part of the same tenure unit as their Pullman-based colleagues and participate equally in departmental planning and decisions, especially as they pertain to graduate education. Vancouver faculty members teach graduate courses to Pullman-based graduate students, and advanced graduate students often move to

the Vancouver campus for expanded opportunities as teaching assistants while working on their dissertations.

The value of being one department is that it makes it possible for WSU Sociology to reach a previously under-served area of the state. It also strengthens the department's offerings in the study of gender, deviance, stratification, and life course issues.

In this article, we introduce Katrina Leupp, the newest member of the Vancouver-based sociology faculty, and Emily-Ann Cross, a Vancouver sociology undergraduate who describes her activities and aspirations.

Katrina Leupp

Katrina Leupp joined the department as an assistant professor in August 2014 after completing her PhD at the University of Washington. Her research centers on the way that gendered employment and family roles impact health and well-being, particularly for mothers.



The population of non-traditional students at WSU-Vancouver has provided Leupp with interesting teaching opportunities.

“The student-parents are quite vocal in class discussions,” said Leupp, who grew up in a small town outside of Sacramento. “And their engagement helps to continually re-fuel my interest in the research.”

Leupp's interest in families and health came from involvement in several work and family organizations like domestic violence centers, labor unions, and Headstart. She still draws upon those experiences in her research.

“My interest in household finances began while I was working in social services and saw that a number of our clients had limited control over money at home,” Leupp said. “I started to think about how control over income impacts all men and women.”

Leupp's work fits well with the sociology department's strength in inequality research and WSU's commitment to health research.

“People often think of health as a mostly biological process, but social processes such as marital satisfaction, employment status, even couples' division of

household chores, are linked to physical and emotional well-being,” Leupp said.

Within the department, Leupp’s research aligns especially well with the focus of research by Amy Wharton, Julie Kmec, and Jennifer Sherman, who study work, gender, or family issues from various angles. At Vancouver, Leupp also has been working with Industrial Organizational Psychologists interested in employment and well-being.

“There’s still a lot for social scientists to uncover about how work and family trends contribute to gender differences in health,” Leupp said. “I’m looking forward to continuing to pursue this research at WSU in the years to come.”

Emily–Ann Cross

Washington State University Vancouver student Emily–Ann Cross discovered her passion for sociology in an unusual setting: a social security office.

“I got two different tellers—a man and a woman—and I was sitting there in the waiting room looking at how the different customers are treating the tellers that they get,” Cross said.

“I was just sitting there making this research plan in my head.... I would love to be in the back room for several days, just watching and doing a sociological study.”

That’s when she decided to declare sociology as her major.

“When you’re making research questions for fun in your head, I think it’s a little telling,” Cross said. “It’s now a hobby of mine.”

Cross is one of about 35 undergraduate sociology majors at WSU Vancouver. In addition to traditional coursework, sociology majors on the Vancouver campus gain experience interning at local organizations like Food and Water Watch in Portland and local school districts.

Cross interned at a crime victim advocacy center in Vancouver this past fall, where she applied her sociological knowledge to help others.

“Our court system doesn’t help the victim because they are just trying to get a conviction, not trying to help get the victim back on their feet,” Cross said. “That’s what our job is.”

She spent much of the semester helping to organize binders of resources for people who have been impacted by robbery, fraud, and other crimes. The internship

experience was an extension of what she learned in the sociology classroom.

“Sociology teaches you a lot about who is at risk to be victims of a crime and why they are at risk,” Cross said. “[Sociology makes it] easier to understand who you are dealing with and the methods you can use to help them.”

In addition to her sociology major, Cross is pursuing minors in criminal justice and fine arts. She hopes to combine her talents to help people better understand social issues.

“I’ve just been drawing since I was a kid. I never leave home without a sketchbook,” Cross said.

“I would love to write a comic book that deals with social issues. One that I’ve started writing already follows a college student that is a child of an alcoholic and he’s going through this college party scene with [post traumatic stress disorder] that has to do with alcohol.”



Artwork by Emily-Ann Cross

And it all started with a trip to the social security office.

