Welcome to the Middlebush Times: the new official graduate student newsletter of the University of Missouri sociology department. Last semester, I was elected President of the Sociology Graduate Student Group (SGSG) in a tense and highly contested race. After the election and the wild election night shenanigans which followed, I began to think about how to best serve my constituents. It just so happened that the day before I had taken a trip down nostalgia lane with a friend as we discussed my dislike for my high school student newspaper. With contempt for mainly the teacher in charge of the paper (with whom I had a serious feud) I ranted and raved about how cheesy and lame the so called “Spirit” was. Then it hit me! We can have our own newsletter in the department and it won’t be lame or cheesy. Brilliant, I know.

In order to actualize this vision, I will not bring the full force of my (lacking) literary talents. As a family man, and an avid fan of doing nothing, I realize that I simply am not funny or interesting enough to produce a quality newsletter on my own. This is where all you wonderful graduate students, faculty, alumni, and staff fit in perfectly. As President and creator of the newsletter I will take responsibility for the tasks of the editor. What I ask of you is to send me your stories, commentaries, drawings, announcements, praises, etc. I will do my best to have each contribution included in newsletters in their original form (uncensored). While priority will be given to graduate students, faculty, alumni, and staff are always welcome to contribute in any form.

As President, one of my goals for the next year is to provide sociology graduate students, as well as faculty and staff of the department, with a forum for light hearted commentary and information. This literary water cooler will hopefully do the job. At this point, you most likely have a lot of questions of how this all might work. In planning ahead, I have created a series of scenarios which hopefully will help everyone understand the goals and possibilities of the newsletter.

“Stephen, shouldn’t we be more professional!? I mean, c’mon we are academics!”

We have ample opportunities to take ourselves seriously and present this “front-stage” image of ourselves. This newsletter seeks to build connections between
the “back-stages” (you can decide for yourself if this really exists) of members of the department with cheerful observations and remarks.

“This is the greatest idea I have ever heard! How often will I get to read it?”

It is still a bit too early to be certain, but ideally we will have enough contributions to publish a newsletter monthly.

“I am a blue chip talent in writing, but I am scared to put myself out there for others to scrutinize.”

Fear not, we are all friends here and despite any differences of opinion, we can see value in the work of our peers. Every contribution, regardless of length, topic, perceived importance, or popularity will be valued the same and published. Plus, let’s not get too heavy with this newsletter—let’s keep it fun and entertaining.

“Why are you asking me to write for this thing? I have plenty of more important things to do.”

That’s fine. I realize we are all busy people with hectic schedules. But, don’t feel pressured to write anything. Rather, feel honored that your opinion is respected enough to matter to me (and members of the department). So, if you somehow manage to find a short time window in your ceaseless work schedule, please feel free to contribute.

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Grad Students Enjoy Summer Float Trip

By Braden Leap

The annual Sociology float trip: the cool morning breeze blowing through your tent; the smell of coffee cooked over a campfire in the morning; canoeing on clear, pristine waters; and, raves that just happen to happen in your campground at 10:30 PM after you’ve been in the sun on the river for 8+ hours. I’m sure most everyone in attendance would agree, there’s nothing quite like rave music pumping through your campground when you’re sunburned to a crisp and everything in your tent is damp after a brief monsoon while you’re trying to go to sleep. Regardless, the annual Soc. float was fantastic. Trip highlights included—spending time with friends, my truck blowing up just outside Jefferson City, amazing weather, fantastic food at the Friday cookout, perfect water levels, a couple snakes for excitement, Mike listening to the Communist Manifesto on tape while canoeing, the raft blasting “I’m on a boat”, Sunday breakfast at the diner, rope swinging out of a tree, and Steve falling out that tree directly onto his face. Don’t worry though, he’s fine. His fall was broken by at least a good inch of water. If this sounds like a good time to you (which it should), and you happened to miss this year’s float, don’t worry. Not only will there be a float trip in the Summer of 2014, we may be moving to a new location where there won’t be pop up raves and we can camp next to the river.
This summer, sociology graduate students, faculty, and friends were at it again. We put down our laptops, picked up our bats, turned our hats backward (maybe just a few of us), and had some serious softball fun. As veterans of the summer softball circuit here in Columbia, we decided to go up a level in competition this year. No more E league for us! This summer we hit the big-time that is the D league. Well, similar to Icarus, we may have gotten a bit ahead of ourselves and flown too close to the proverbial sun. As great of a team as we are, parks and rec softball in Columbia is no joke. We competed against appliance stores, motorcycle dealers, what seemed like a team of retired MLB players, and a slew of other teams with some of the weirdest names you will ever hear. It is fascinating how quickly one gets to know someone when playing on a softball team together. Who would have known that Braden Leap is a softball phenom who can crank a ball 300 ft with ease, that Eileen Bjornstrom is perhaps the best first basewoman in Columbia, that Jason Rodriquez has the shortstop ability of a young Derek Jeter, that Jenna Pirok can befriend any umpire in minutes, or that Wayne Brekhus is guaranteed to make a diving catch in every single game (no joke—ask around). Indeed, softball has brought us together again this summer for great times, great friendships, and for better or worse, great stories to tell. Sadly, as I write this piece, we are yet to win a game in the summer league. While we like to think we held our own in these games, winning is not always the most important thing. As Coach Kara McGee puts it, “We lead the league in bravery.” Always have, maybe always will.
Beginning in February 2013, volunteers from the Sociology Graduate Student Group (SGSG) began dedicating two hours every other week to The Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, located in Columbia, Missouri. The Food Bank is a hunger relief network that serves over 32 counties in central and northeast Missouri. In 2012, The Food Bank distributed over 28 million pounds of food and household products to various food pantries in their service area. In order to provide so many households with these necessities, The Food Bank relies on their volunteers to assist them in sorting and repackaging donated bulk items into family-sized packages. Items are stored based on safe food handling practices and then distributed to one of the 131 member agencies free of charge. Among our group of graduate student-volunteers, we donated 60 hours over the course of the Spring 2013 semester towards our goal of 100 hours in one year towards ending food insecurity. Food security, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is generally thought of having access to “nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2011) for all members of a household. On the other hand, food insecurity tends to be defined as not knowing where your next meal is going to come from or not having access to nutritionally sound food. Towards this end, the Sociology Graduate Student Groups hopes to continue to dedicate their time towards a minimum of 40 hours of service with The Food Bank in hopes to alleviate the burden on many food insecure households. If you would like to be involved with our efforts, please feel free to speak to Ashley Vancil at advgg3@mail.missouri.edu or any other member of the SGSG Executive Board committee.
SGSG Can Make Your Wildest Dreams Come True

By Stephen Christ

A core principle of SGSG is the professional development of our emerging graduate scholars. This form of development usually takes place at conferences like the ASA or MSS annual meetings. Unfortunately, money does not grow on trees and many of us graduate students are faced with a decision of whether to go to a conference, or to just buy groceries. Our department has definitely stepped up efforts to fund our conference endeavors, and SGSG is pleased to contribute as well. In the past two years, we have distributed over $3500 to 12 members! We want to help fund your travel, too! So, it’s a win-win situation. Join SGSG, make friends with your peers, and receive the funding you need to make yourself a sociology superstar. Talk to our fantastic treasurer, David Criger, for more details.

Upcoming Events

Friday, August 30th
Social Deviants Softball Game
6pm at Rainbow Softball Field (Cosmo Park)

Tuesday, September 3rd
First SGSG Meeting of Semester
5pm in Graduate Student Lounge

Wednesday, September 4th
Graduate Student Colloquium Series featuring Matt Cousineau
1pm in 235 Arts and Sciences Building

Friday, September 6th
Four Directions: Indigenous Peoples and Allies Meeting
2-3pm in Multicultural Center
Social Deviants Softball Game
9pm at Rainbow Softball Field (Cosmo Park)

Saturday, September 14th
Sociology Department Picnic
4-6pm at Fairview Park Shelter (1001 Fairview Road)

We want to hear from you!
Send any and all contributions to Stephen Christ at src257@mail.missouri.edu

Abstract: MadLibs!!

This paper presents a ________ method for ________

the ________. Using ________, the
(noun few people have heard of) (something you didn’t invent)

_______ was measured to be ________ +/- ________
(property) (number) (number)

_______. Results show ________ agreement with
(units) (sexy adjective)

theoretical predictions and significant improvement over
previous efforts by ________, et al. The work presented
(Loser)

here has profound implications for future studies of
(buzzword)

_______ and may one day help solve the problem of
(supreme sociological concern)

Keywords: ________, ________, ________
(buzzword) (buzzword) (buzzword)