

Sociology, social work expands view of the world

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The Department of Sociology and Social Work in Brewer Hall offers programs and clubs that encourage students to expand their view of the world.

When students hear about sociology or social work, many of them assume the job involves working around children. However, there is more to this field of study.

Sociology and Social Work are two entirely different fields of study. Social work is the practice of advocating for individuals and communities; sociology is the study of societies and human interaction.

Dr. Maureen Newton explained that a degree in social work covers many areas. An entry-level worker could be working in public health, assisting folks in possibly a planning clinic or trying to address sexually transmitted diseases; some work with DHR, focusing on child welfare.

Others work in home health agencies, helping people cope with acute and life threatening health conditions and running programs. Many of the department's graduate students run non-profit programs.

Students may take Introduction to Social Work to see if the material interests them; it is a 300-level course. If students are not interested in a career as a social worker, they can still use the course as an extra elective so it won't be a wasted class.

"Social workers do everything from one-on-one case work with an individual, all the way up to being members of Congress," Newton said.

"We are everywhere, we just don't always have the title of Social Work with it. We may be a manager, program director, a Senator or a representative. We do a lot more than just child welfare. It's a part of what we do but that's only a piece of it. We're trying to address social problems and prevent social problems. So we're prevention and intervention," Newton said.

Dr. Tina Deshotels is an Associate Professor within the Sociology Department. She explained that, much like social work, there are programs that students can take to see if the student wishes to pursue it as a degree option; some of the programs include media based classes, theory and seminar, classes in religion, education and a course that Deshotels herself will be teaching called Drugs and Society.

"All of the programs are great for students thinking about a career in sociology. It's such a broad field that even if they don't want to major in it, the courses can help in fields such as criminal justice, government, religion, media, education and so on. It's a field that covers just about everything," Deshotels said.

The sociology program has three student organizations: the Sociology Club, JSU Students for Equality and Alpha Kappa Delta.

Together, they all work toward unifying people and promoting social justice, as well as advocating for strong academic standards.

Members of each organization have participated in academic conferences and performed volunteer work in the community, as well as sponsored campus and community events. “We have a student Social Work Club, and they do a lot of service activities throughout the year,” Newton said.

“They just assisted with the Welcome Back Veterans Picnic,” she said.

“Also, every year we host a holiday party for the Boys and Girls Club here in Jacksonville. [The club members] collect gifts for the kids. We get names and ages of the kids, between about 30 and 60 kids, and then we bring in a Santa who passes out the gifts to the children,” Newton said.

Each member of the faculty have master’s degrees in their fields, and some also have doctorates. Newton mentioned that one alumna from the university, Dr. Rebecca Turner, has a degree in the field of Social Work. Turner is the Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.

Brittany Robertson

Staff Reporter