

COLLEGE OF Arts and Sciences

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2017

In the Field, Lab, & Classroom with Dr. Juan Luis Mata



Dr. Juan Luis Mata

Associate Professor of Biology, Dr. Juan Luis Mata, came to USA in fall 2004 after earning his Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and after doing post-doctoral work at the same institution. His research background is Botany, and his specialization is mycology, the study of fungi. According to Mata, he focuses on “the taxonomy, systematics, evolution and ecology of mushrooms.” The Gulf Coast region is, Mata says, “species-rich for this group and still remains relatively unexplored.”

His research includes a focus on American shiitake and other wood and leaf-litter decomposing mushrooms from the US Gulf Coast region and Caribbean basin. Besides collecting the fruiting bodies he also grows them in Petri plates for physiology studies and DNA extractions. Mata says he has recently “started working with endophyte fungi (those

living inside without causing apparent harm) isolated from both terrestrial and aquatic vascular plants.” Also, recently, he reported on endophytic fungi associated with turtle grass and shoalgrass, important aquatic plants in beach ecosystems.

Mata was born in the U.S. and spent his childhood years in Guatemala. He attended high school in Costa Rica and stayed there for his B.S. and his M.S. degrees in Biology. His Master’s thesis focused on the taxonomy and ecology of Agaricales mushrooms in an oak forest on the slopes of Poás Volcano in Costa Rica. His Ph.D. dissertation examined fungal taxonomy and systematics of the mushroom genera *Lentinula*, *Gymnopus*, and *Rhodocollybia* from the Talamanca Mountains of Costa Rica.

Biology runs in Mata’s family. His parents were microbiologists. Initially, Mata thought he would pursue marine biology, however, he says he “soon ... realized [his] destiny was elsewhere.” Indeed, according to Mata, “Persistence to do things in biology opened up the door for a Master’s in mycology a decade after my graduation.” It

did not hurt that Costa Rica, where he did his B.S. and his M.S. degrees, was “a hot destination for research tourism.” There he met imminent mushroom experts, and one of them, according to Mata, helped “open the doors for his Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.”

At USA, Mata is active in research and is the curator of the Mycological Collection of USA’s Herbarium. Mata makes use of molecular and computational research, and he notes that he “still can extract and amplify DNA from [his] mushrooms with ‘old’ materials and techniques which may be less expensive than newer ones.”

While such extraction and amplification “may be more time consuming,” Mata says these methods “offer a great teaching opportunity for [his] students. For [his] purposes the end product is a DNA sequence to aid in the identification and/or description of a species.” He adds that “most of the work [he does] still relies on the use of a microscope to describe micro-morphology.” Mata likes the Biology curriculum in his department, noting that it “caters to students’ many interests: from

pre-meds to those who just like fishing.” Mata urges students who want to pursue post-graduate studies to undertake a research experience. They need to find a faculty mentor and form a productive relationship that helps them grow as budding researchers.

When he is not in the lab or classroom or out in the field, Mata likes to exercise at the campus Rec Center. Indeed, one can find him there just about every morning, using exercise equipment, swimming or just relaxing. He also likes to do yard work, and lately he says he has been “experimenting with composting and vegetable gardening.”

An avid soccer fan, Mata also keeps a close eye on his favorite teams. As for future plans Mata says “If all goes well, I plan on working at South until my retirement which means at least 10 more years. In that time I will continue developing additional courses and work on my fungal collections.” Mata hopes to collect more in Costa Rica and other parts of Central America.



Message from the Dean

In this issue of the College of Arts & Sciences Newsletter you will find informative articles about current and retired faculty members as well as articles about undergraduate and graduate students.

After you read the cover article about Associate Professor of Biology Dr. Juan Luis Mata, be sure to read about the anthropological research of Dr. Mark Moberg, Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. You will also find articles on Dr. Bin Wang, Professor of Mathematics and Statistics, and Dr. Alex Beebe, Assistant Professor of Earth Sciences.

Two students are featured in this issue of the Newsletter. Undergraduate Biology major Caroline Barnes is a member of the USA Honors College. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Biology. A & S graduate student Bobby Faulk is enrolled in the M.S. Program in Psychology and the M.A. Program in Sociology. In spring 2017, he received a prestigious National Science Foundation Fellowship, and he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology. He received his B.S. in Psychology from USA in 2015.

This issue of the Newsletter also focuses on retired Professor Dr. John Freeman. He was the chairperson of the Department of Biology for 22 years and was a USA faculty member for 34 years.

As you make your way through this issue, you will also find other news about A & S faculty members, students, and alumni.

I hope you enjoy reading the A & S Newsletter, and please share it with friends.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrzej Wierzbicki
Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
HUMB 118

Dr. Mark Moberg's Ethnographic Research



Dr. Mark Moberg

Dr. Mark Moberg, Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, came to USA in 1989 after completing his Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from UCLA in 1988. Cultural Anthropology is the study of social behavior and cultural practices using participant observation and heavily involves interviews of local informants by the anthropologist. Moberg says his discipline has undergone significant change during his time at USA. According to Moberg, “Probably half of the dissertations completed today in cultural anthropology focus on communities in developed industrialized cultures such as the US. We also have come to recognize the merits of ‘studying up,’ that is, looking closely at the behavior and values of economic and political elites who wield so much power in our society.”

Moberg credits inspiring undergraduate professors at the University of Iowa, particularly the late Dr. Helen Schuster, Dr. Mike Chibnik, and Dr. Doug Midgett, for providing him with models of excellence in teaching and research. His favorite course to teach at USA is Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (AN 100). When the semester begins, few of his students have any experience with anthropology, so Moberg says his goal is “to recreate for them the sense of liberation and wonder that [he] first encountered when [he] signed up for anthropology as a college freshman so many years ago.” He wants his students to understand “that there are many ways that human societies choose to organize themselves, to make a living, to construct

families and define marriage and other relationships, ...” Moberg hopes his AN 100 students “will emerge with a different way of viewing the world around them.” Moberg finds optimism in the fact that many of his students today “are often more highly aware of what is going on in the world, particularly in the realm of social justice.” Reflecting on his AN 100 classes, Moberg adds, “I have seen not only the composition of my classes become much more diverse but also find that even majority-member students are vastly more aware of cultural diversity—and much more accepting of it—than were their counterparts three decades ago.”

Moberg is the author and/or editor of six peer-reviewed books as well as numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. He is the past Editor-in-Chief of the highly acclaimed journal, *Human Organization*. His books include *Engaging Anthropological Theory: A Social and Political History* (Routledge 2013), *Fair Trade and Social Justice: Global Ethnographies* (edited with Sarah Lyon, New York University Press, 2010), and *Slipping Away: Banana Politics and Fair Trade in the Eastern Caribbean* (Berghahn Books 2010).

For approximately the last 15 years, Moberg says his “ethnographic research has centered on a global trade dispute that has had devastating impacts on a number of Caribbean countries. As a result of a ruling in the World Trade Organization that favored the Chiquita corporation and the US government (which brought the WTO suit), countries in the English-speaking Caribbean lost their preferential access to the banana retail market in the United Kingdom. To a country like Dominica, which formerly derived 80% of its export earnings from bananas, this has been devastating. And the devastation is especially widespread because, unlike Central and South America, the banana industry in the Caribbean is based entirely on small, family-run farms of just a few acres.”

In his 2008 book *Slipping Away*, Moberg notes that one effect of economic calamity for the Caribbean banana industry has been “an explosion of emigration and drug transshipment, almost all of it directed to the United States.”

Moberg’s upcoming research will take him back to Hopkins, Belize, the site of his initial research for his dissertation in 1985. Much has changed in Hopkins since then Moberg says that with “the help of a small grant from USA, [he] will be returning to Hopkins at the end of this year to start to examine these changes, which have transformed a small backwater into a truly global tourist destination.” He adds, “There are profound questions to be answered in this transition, particularly of who wins and who loses, who is in a position to take advantage of the opportunities of a globalizing economy, and who is not.”

When he is not teaching or immersed in his research, Moberg loves to listen to music and to sing. He grew up listening to his father’s classical music, and he sings with the Mobile Opera chorus and with his parish choir. He is also a fan of old movies that have marvelous musical soundtracks such as *The Third Man*, *Vertigo*, *On the Waterfront*, and *North by Northwest*. He has been the president and has served on the Board of Directors of an ecumenical organization based in Mobile, Quest for Social Justice. According to Moberg, “The group had been organized in 2001 by a number of Catholic sisters who tried to engage Mobile’s various faith communities in seeking racial reconciliation and social justice. We worked on issues of immigration reform, foreign policy, the death penalty, and tax and constitutional reform in Alabama.” He says “the need for this kind of engagement is greater than ever,” and that is one reason he was so happy to participate in the College of Arts & Sciences’ Democracy Day Teach-In in the spring 2017 semester.



Dr. Bin Wang & Big Data

Dr. Bin Wang

Dr. Bin Wang, Professor of Mathematics & Statistics, joined the College of Arts & Sciences in 2003. He loves teaching statistics courses and takes pride in having taught thousands of USA students. He says “Teaching is a very challenging job. No matter how hard you try to enhance your teaching skills, you will always find that there is room to improve.” With an eye towards improving his pedagogical practices, Wang says he has “attended workshops organized by ILC, the annual Conference on Teaching and Learning by the University of South Alabama, and workshops by [textbook] publishers.”

In his classes, Wang has used team-based learning, and he has taught courses online. He has adopted different technologies to enhance learning in his classes and says he uses statistical software to help teach students “the statistical ideas behind different methods.”

In discussing why he chose to be a professor of statistics, Wang says mathematics is his favorite subject and he did not enter college with the idea that he would become a university statistician. While pursuing his M.S. degree, Wang says a research project motivated him to learn statistics. Originally from China, Wang had limited experience with data analysis partly because the Internet was new in China while he was pursuing his Master’s degree. According to Wang, he taught himself statistics by “using the Help menu of a statistical software package.” He then decided to enroll in a Ph.D. program in Statistics in order to really understand the discipline. When he completed his Ph.D. at Case Western Reserve University, he knew he had developed a passion for statistical theory and methodology development, and he made his decision to establish his career in

academia rather than to pursue a position at a research institute or with a consulting company.

Today, we live in a world of “big-data,” and statisticians are central to on-going efforts to engage productively with such large-scale information flows. According to Wang, “The new challenges are how to analyze massive data and how to turn big-data into actions.” His current research focuses on the challenges of next-generation sequencing data analysis.

Securing competitive grants play a key role in enabling Wang to conduct his research. He has been funded by the National Institutes of Health as a co-investigator or consultant on many research grants on cancer studies or basic sciences. Recently, he has been funded by the Simons Foundation to help him carry out his research.

Wang says he plans to seek external funds from the National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health to provide support for his research. He wants funding to support undergraduate Statistics majors and graduate students in Statistics who would assist him in a “massive gene expression data analysis.” Wang adds, “Together with other statisticians in the department [of Mathematics & Statistics], we will host workshops every year ... to provide statistical training for graduate students and young faculty/researchers from other disciplines.”

In addition to conducting his research and teaching classes, Wang also is the director of the Statistical Consulting Center in the College of Arts & Sciences. Faculty, research staff, and students can take advantage of the consulting services the

Center provides. According to Wang, the statisticians at the Center collaborate with researchers at the Mitchell Cancer Institute, the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, and the University hospitals as well as with others at USA. According to Wang, “In the near future, we will build a team of statisticians with various backgrounds so that we are able to provide services to researchers in different research fields.”

The Center has recently received funding from an NIH grant from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), and Wang says the Statistical Consulting Center uses CCTS funds to provide “services to a lot of USA scholars whose research [is] not currently funded. We help them to improve their experiment designs and their grant application proposals.” Wang is particularly appreciative of the help that has been provided by Dr. Kimberly Littlefield, Assistant Vice President, Research Development and Learning, and Dr. Mark Gillespie, Professor and Chair of Pharmacology Department. Both have helped advertise the Consulting Center’s services and have provided tremendous support for the Center.

When he is not teaching or conducting research, Wang enjoys listening to music. He says music “has the magic to touch our soul.”



UNDERGRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Caroline Barnes



Ms. Caroline Barnes

Senior Caroline Barnes majors in Biology with a concentration in Marine Biology. Her minor is in Geology. Prior to coming to college at USA, Barnes was already determined to major in Biology. According to Barnes, her fascination with water and the organisms in it started when she was six years old. She says that “over time, [her] interest has shifted within the field, but [she has] always loved science and water.”

A member of the Honors College, Barnes has been active in undergraduate research. Under the mentorship of Dr. Kelly Major, Barnes participated in the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows

program (SURF). Her research examined a species of algae unique to the Great Salt Plains in Oklahoma. “It is new to science,” Barnes says; “so very little is known about it, but it is tolerant to all kinds of extreme conditions which makes it a scientific anomaly.” She says her goal was to “learn more about this organism’s ability to tolerate extreme conditions by observing growth, photosynthetic output, and pigment content.”

The positive impact of her undergraduate research experience is something Barnes cannot overstate. She believes students should definitely look for opportunities to create professional relationships with faculty mentors while developing the skills one needs in one’s field of study. According to Barnes, “Once you have that experience and knowledge, no one can take it away from you. You will always have your education, no matter what happens.”

When applying for college, Barnes considered attending the University of Miami and Louisiana State University, but she ultimately chose USA because of the scholarship offer and the opportunities for research at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

Barnes is from New Orleans and is

very active in Mardi Gras there. She has been fluent in French since

elementary school, and she loves reading. Indeed, she says, “I love all sorts of books, but my all-time favorites are *The Great Gatsby* (and anything else by Fitzgerald) as well as *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez and the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, popularly known as *Game of Thrones*.”

After she graduates in May, Barnes plans to work in Mobile for the summer and then head to Europe to travel. She wants to travel to Italy (she is of Italian descent), but then she wants to pursue a Ph.D. in Biology in January 2019. When asked about advice for freshman and sophomore students, Barnes says, “College is a wonderful experience both socially and intellectually, so it is important to make sure you take advantage of both. Also, eat at the cafeteria. You’ll save a lot of money and you won’t gain the freshman fifteen like I did.”

Getting to Know Hydrology & Environmental Geochemistry with Dr. Alex Beebe

Mobile native Dr. Alex Beebe, Assistant Professor of Geology in the Department of Earth Sciences, graduated from USA in 2007 with a double major in Geology and Biology. At Clemson University, he received his Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering and Earth Sciences in 2013, and then he applied for his current tenure-track job, joining the Earth Sciences faculty in August 2013.

Since his homecoming to USA, Beebe has published peer-reviewed manuscripts with major scientific journals such as *Ecological Engineering* and the *Journal of Environmental Chemical Engineering*. He regularly presents his research at national conferences and has been awarded prestigious fellowships and grants. He has also mentored numerous undergraduate researchers and two Environmental Toxicology graduate students.

His research focuses on hydrology and environmental geochemistry. He examines relationships between human activities and the quality and quantity of fresh water resources. Beebe says his goal “is to provide the scientific knowledge needed to better protect and preserve our precious water resources.”

Beebe says he is passionate about “managing the interaction between human development and our local natural resources, including, for example, the numerous streams and rivers that flow into Mobile Bay and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, the unique ecology and commercial fishery grounds of Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, and the abundant fresh groundwater that exists just below the surface of much of coastal Alabama.”

His research addresses “the role of groundwater in affecting the environmental quality of our coastal estuaries.” According to Beebe, “when we think of the factors that influence water

quality in a coastal estuary like Mobile Bay, we tend to focus on the visible streams and rivers that drain into the estuary. While this approach has been refined over decades of research, hydrologists and oceanographers have recently found that direct, submarine groundwater discharge is also an important source of both water and pollutants to coastal waters.”

Beebe is as engaged with his students as he is with his research. He likes all of his courses but particularly singles out Earth History (GY112) as his favorite lower-level course and hydrology (GY425/575) and field geology (GY480) as his favorite upper-level courses. According to Beebe, “Earth History is my favorite introductory course because it covers so many grand scientific theories and ideas that stretch over multiple disciplines. We start by covering the cosmos and formation of the universe and solar system (Big Bang, etc.) and work our way through the origin of life and the evolution of the planet (Evolution, Plate Tectonics, Dinosaurs, etc.). It is exciting for me to teach a ‘history’ course because so much of my expertise is based on modern geological processes.”

Beebe likes teaching Hydrology “because it typically draws an interdisciplinary group of students each year.” This course is cross-listed as an undergraduate/graduate course, and Beebe says he has “developed several rigorous, interdisciplinary exercises that force students from the various backgrounds to learn to communicate and work together. We have weekly round-table paper discussions that focus on current and controversial hydrologic topics (water pollution, droughts, flooding, and even hydrologically induced earthquakes).” Beebe also enjoys teaching the Field Geology course, the senior capstone course which he has co-taught with Dr. David Allison and Dr. Doug Haywick (who

retired from the Department of Earth Sciences in summer 2017). Designed by Allison, the course asks students “to apply everything that they have learned over the previous two years in the process of creating the highest level of geologic productivity: geologic maps.” According to Beebe, in Field Geology, the students and faculty members “spend around a month [together], eating, sleeping, and breathing geology” in Texas and New Mexico.

When he is not teaching or doing his research, Beebe still focuses his attention on water. He says he “grew up in Mobile swimming competitively in the summers, fishing with [his] brother and dad, and skiing on the rivers with friends.” He lives on Mobile Bay and likes fishing, kayaking, and boating. When not on the water, he likes to spend time in his garden and to can his vegetables. Beebe also enjoys reading, exercising, watching college football, and playing bass guitar.



Dr. Alex Beebe



GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Robert “Bobby” Faulk



Mr. Bobby Faulk

Graduate student Bobby Faulk plans on pursuing a Ph.D. after completing his Master’s degrees in Psychology and Sociology at USA. Earning simultaneous Master’s degrees does not happen often, but Faulk is more than up to the challenge. In 2015, Faulk graduated from USA with an undergraduate degree in Psychology while also completing the Honors Program. He says he has always been interested in the ways people think and interact.

In spring of 2017, Faulk was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, which he will use to pursue his Ph.D. He was one of two College of Arts & Sciences majors to receive the NSF award: Madison Tuttle, who majored in Chemistry and who graduated in May 2017, was the other awardee. Tuttle is pursuing her Ph.D. in Chemistry at Ohio State University. Faulk is applying for doctoral programs in psychology this semester—thus far with particular interest in Vanderbilt, Texas A & M, University of Mississippi, and University of Texas Southwestern.

For his undergraduate pursuits, Faulk was accepted to Vanderbilt, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn, and the University of Alabama. However, he wanted to stay close to home for college and was excited about the USA Honors Program.

Some of Faulk’s favorite undergraduate classes were Dr. Kevin Meeker’s “Introduction to Ethics” and the Honors section of “God & Evil in Logic and Literature” (co-taught with Dr. Bob Coleman), Dr. Ted Poston’s “Philosophy of Science” and “Symbolic Logic,” Dr. Ann Guzy’s honors section of “The Hero’s Journey,” Dr. Doug Haywick’s honors section of “Science in the Movies,” all of Dr. Doug Marshall’s and Dr. Chris Freed’s sociology courses (especially Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Mental Health & Illness), Dr. Josh Foster’s “Social Psychology,” and Dr. Tim Slattery’s “Cognition.”

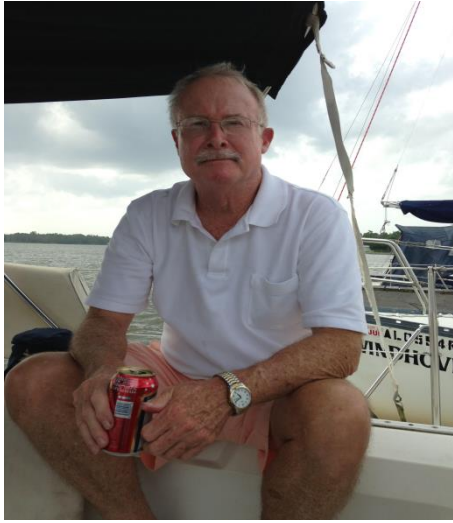
For his Senior Honors Thesis Faulk focused on the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide and post-traumatic stress symptoms in female victims of violence. Dr. Phillip N. Smith in the Department of Psychology was Faulk’s thesis mentor. According to Faulk, “Our major findings were the relations among the symptom clusters of post-traumatic stress disorder and the constructs of the interpersonal theory. Our results could hopefully be used to further inform the treatment of individuals with PTSD who may be experiencing suicidal ideation. Since then, our lab has published a paper on the topic, and I am a co-author.”

Faulk’s current research efforts are in multiple areas of social and behavioral science. For his master’s thesis in psychology, he is focusing on predicting student persistence in STEM majors using student engagement data along with psychological and social factors. He and his mentors hope to use the information gleaned from this research to apply interventions to increase student persistence towards success in college degrees. For his master’s thesis in sociology, he is focusing on the relationship between individual experiences of poor mental health and socioeconomic status. Additionally, he has presented research on helicopter parenting practices and their effects on emerging adult children’s psychological outcomes, and he is preparing a paper on the subject for publication.

For recreation, Faulk says he enjoys martial arts: “In the last few years, I have discovered that I have a penchant for martial arts. I practice Taekwondo and kickboxing at the local ATA training center. There’s something about martial arts that makes my heart sing!” His other hobbies include playing video games, trying new foods, reading comic books and novels, hiking, and watching movies.

When asked what advice he would give to USA undergraduates, Faulk says not to get “discouraged if you are not 100% certain about what you want to do with your major or even what you want to major in. I wasn’t certain that I was in the right major for a long time, but I didn’t let myself be hindered by my uncertainty. If you like what you’re doing, and you’re content with it, you can excel.”

Arts & Sciences Retiree Corner



Dr. John Freeman

Dr. John Freeman, Emeritus Professor of Biology, was a USA faculty member for 34 years. In that time, he had an active research career, receiving grants from the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, a Sea Grant, and the United States Department of Agriculture. When USA celebrated its 50th anniversary, Freeman was named one of USA's 50 outstanding researchers. He served as Department chairperson for 22 years and says he is proud of his work to "turn the department around to be a very productive and progressive department."

Freeman's extensive research focused on crustaceans, including, brine shrimp, shrimp, blue crabs and barnacles. A developmental biologist, Freeman explored questions about the cellular mechanisms of growth and limb formation. His research led him to publish 32 peer-reviewed publications prestigious journals. He says his research also led him to examine practical questions "such as how can we stimulate molting in blue crabs in the summer, and how can we perturb barnacle settlement and growth?" Freeman adds that the "proximity to the coastal areas was a significant factor in my decision to work at South."

Freeman's pleasure in research mirrored his passion for teaching. Indeed, he fondly remembers classes on vertebrate embryology and on invertebrates. He says he "loved talking about the many invertebrate phyla to marine biology majors one term and then constructing a vertebrate organism from a single cell in the next semester." He adds that "the laboratory components were also fun to teach."

While Freeman taught and served as a research mentor for countless students, he particularly recalls Marshall Porterfield who, according to Freeman, "started working with me as a freshman with some academic difficulties." Freeman says Porterfield "went on to graduate with honors, attained graduate degrees, had several of his studies on the space shuttle flights, became a Professor of Engineering at Purdue University, and recently [has] become one of the managing directors at NASA." Freeman adds, "I like to think that his career began when he worked in my lab and developed a mechanism to count epidermal cells in live shrimp."

As department chairperson, Freeman's impact was significant. In reflecting on these 22 years, Freeman says "we were successful in attracting outstanding faculty who became excellent in teaching and research. We also attracted and developed several outstanding Instructors. I feel that, upon my retirement, I had accomplished all I could for the department, a good feeling."

When asked about how he decided to become a biologist, Freeman wryly responds: "I was too small to play football in the NFL so at the age of 11 I decided that I loved everything about the ocean and would become a marine biologist." Much later, an invertebrate biology course at Florida State captured Freeman hook, line, and sinker. He had found his career.

Now, with his satisfying academic career behind him, Freeman says he loves retirement. While he still hopes to "dabble in research on anti-barnacle schemes," he says he likes to spend his time sailing. According to Freeman, "My goals of working on my reading list and learning to be a good cook are still my goals. I will explore them as time allows. No rush."



Department of Political Science & Criminal Justice.

Graduate student **Laura Carlson** won the USA Award in Social Science for her thesis project titled, "Understanding Indigenous Trust in Government Institutions and Administration: Evidence From Bolivia." **Dr. Corina Schulze**, Associate Professor, has been appointed a non-resident Fellow at Duke University's Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Social Sciences (REGSS). **Dr. Philip Habel**, Associate Professor and department chair, is an Affiliate Senior Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow.

Department of Visual Arts. The M.F.A. graduate students are participating in an exhibition at Mobile Museum of Art Called "Do It" January 26 to July 1, 2018. **Jenni Krchak**, University of South Alabama graduate with a B.A in Art History with minors in Studio Art and Chemistry, just completed a conservation internship at the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, Florida. She is now applying to graduate programs in Art Conservation. Sculpture by Professor **Susan Fitzsimmons**, chair of the department, is featured in *Art International Magazine* (2017), "The Best Modern and Contemporary Artists" catalog, (Berlin, September 2017). Professor **Benjamin Shamback** was recently selected by the USA chapter of Phi Kappa Phi as Artist of the Year 2017-2018.

Department of History. **Dr. Claire Cage**, Assistant Professor, has received the Baker-Burton Prize for the "best first book on European History published between 2013 and 2017" from the European History Section of the Southern Historical Association in October. The award is for her 2015 book *Unnatural Frenchmen: The Politics of Priestly Celibacy and Marriage, 1720-1815*. In November, Cage presented her new research on the evolution of forensic science in 19th century France at the conference on "Reformation, Revolution and Crisis in European History" at the University of Sydney, Australia. **Dr.**

Rebecca Williams, Associate Professor, presented her research on the 9th-10th century Islamic scholar Al-Tabari at the Workshop "Arabic Past: Histories and Historiographies" at the School of Oriental and Arabic Studies, University of London, UK. **Dr. David Messenger**, Professor and department chair, presented a paper on Nazi and Allied intelligence activities in northwestern Spain during the Second World War at the conference "Between Two Fires: Neutral Countries as Clandestine Battlegrounds, 1939-1962" at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada.

Department of Physics. **Dr. Romulus Godang**, Professor, was recently selected by the USA chapter of Phi Kappa Phi as its Scholar of the Year 2017-2018.

Department of Chemistry. Three professors have recently received research grants. **Dr. Jim Davis**, Professor, has received \$224,999.79 from Faraday Technology. **Dr. David Battiste**, Assistant Professor, secured a \$15,000

grant from the Gulf Coast RCD Council. **Dr.**

Edward Duranty, Assistant Professor, has received \$7,647.98 from the Battelle Memorial Institute, Pacific NW Division. On 4 November 2017, **Dr. Sandra Stenson**, Professor, directed the Girls Exploring Math and Science (GEMS) program on the USA campus. 171 girls from 62 schools (grades 4-9) from seven school systems participated along with 59 attending parents and over 100 USA volunteers.

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work.

Sociology major **Tiina Trutsi** is being inducted in Alpha Kappa Delta: the International Sociology Honor Society. She graduates this December and is a member of the USA soccer team. Trutsi was recently voted to the 2017 CoSIDA Academic All-District @ 4 Women's Soccer Team. Anthropology major and graduating senior **Brittney Highland** will travel to Ethiopia to conduct paleoanthropological fieldwork as part of a highly-competitive NSF-REU she received last year. She just defended her undergraduate senior thesis on experimental archaeology. **Dr. Phil Carr**, Professor, was her mentor.

Dr. Lesley Gregoricka was invited to a prestigious research seminar hosted by the School of Advanced Research in Sante Fe on "The Evolution of Syphilis: A New Approach to an Old Debate," which will take a more holistic approach to addressing some of the main issues that have led to intense debate about the origin and distribution of treponematosi, with the goal of developing a more unified research framework for investigating the evolution of treponemal infection. **Dr. Hosic Min** received a grant from the Gulf States Health Policy Research Center.

Department of English. Cambridge University Press has just published Associate Professor Dr. Chris Raczkowski's edited collection, *A History of American Crime Fiction*. Consisting of 25 essays (including one by Raczkowski and one by Dr. Ellen Harrington), this volume covers everything from the roots of crime literature in 17th-century sermons to family crime dramas such as *The Sopranos*. Palgrave Macmillan published Associate Professor **Dr. Ellen Harrington's** monograph, *Conrad's Sensational Heroines: Gender and Representation in the Late Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. This study examines Conrad's treatment of women characters in his late novels and his subversion of narrative formulas found in Sensation Fiction (Victorian-era works focused on murder and melodrama).

Phi Sigma Iota (PSI), the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature's Honor Society, held its annual poetry slam (FLAM) in November 2017. Students and faculty members from across the campus read poetry in different languages, including Chinese, Bangla, Urdu, Spanish, Hindi, Catalan, Russian, Hungarian, Latin, German, Romanian, Portuguese, and French. The event also featured an open mic period for sharing more poetry.