

# HMS Messenger

Volume 2, Issue 2

Fall 2015

**Special points of interest:**

- Check out the many summer opportunities for students!
- Meet new HMS professor Sirry Alang!
- Check out a new course in spring 2016: Food, Medicine, and Public Health

**Inside this issue:**

<i>A Note from the Director</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Awards Received</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Curricular Highlights</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Meet the Faculty: Sirry Alang</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Student Summer Opportunities</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>New HMS Faculty Publications</i>	<b>6</b>
<i>An Intern's Experience at HCLV</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>Combating Rabies: Prof Pete Costa</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>Spring 2016 HMS Course Listings</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>What Our Alumni Are Doing</i>	<b>8</b>

## Global Health Challenges in Ghana: A Student's Experience

My name is Hugh Bartlett. I am a third year Biology major with minors in Health Medicine & Society and Africana Studies. This past summer I spent six weeks travelling throughout Ghana with a Canadian organization called Operation Groundswell through a grant provided by the Eckardt Scholar fund. The purpose of the program was to learn about the health care system of Ghana and the cultural environment of the nation. During my stay in Ghana I gained first-hand knowledge about how their health care system operates in rural areas. Also, I strengthened my personal characteristics and had an unbelievable time immersing myself in a foreign culture.

I learned about public health and health care through experiences in local communities and hospitals. I participat-

ed in community health outreaches in rural farming villages outside of Cape Coast (in the central region) and Sandema (in the northeast region) through a partnership with local NGOs that work in the villages to promote health and education. These outreaches allowed each community member the opportunity to engage in counseling with a professional nurse. For many of the community members these community health outreaches are the only time they voice concerns to a medical professional. I learned about the health struggles that people of rural areas face through talking with community members and sitting in on counseling sessions.

I remember distinctly the case of one man who had a urethral catheter that needed to be changed every three

weeks, but that had not been changed in six weeks. The man explained that he did not have insurance and was unable to pay for transportation, medical supplies, and hospital fees. This example highlights the divide between policy and practice within the health care system. Ghana has a national health insurance system aimed at providing free health care to all of its citizens, yet there are still millions of people in the country without insurance. Many of these people without health insurance cite frustrations such as the distance to the registration sites, long waits, and enrollment fees as reasons why they did not have insurance; others are simply ignorant of the health benefits of enrolling in the insurance.

My experiences with working in local communities taught me the importance of assessing the health care system at a local level to develop effective public policy. One area of healthcare that places the largest gap between public policy and community-level action is the area of mental health care. I became increasingly interested in this subject as the trip went on and I dedicated my ten days of independent travel to learning more.

*Continued on page 3...*



## A Note from the Director...



Kelly F. Austin

Assistant Professor of  
Sociology &  
Director of Health,  
Medicine and Society

*“This year,  
HMS is  
continuing to  
offer some  
amazing  
opportunities  
for students,  
including  
internships,  
conference  
funding, and  
research.”*

Hello HMS students, faculty, and staff! I hope you are all having a wonderful fall semester. Change is in the air as we begin the search process for the third joint faculty position in HMS focused on Community Health and Community Engaged research. We also are welcoming some new courses to the HMS roster this spring. For example, Dr. Bonnie Coyle will be offering a course on Food, Medicine, and Public Health. In the coming months, the core HMS faculty will continue discussion on how to best revise our curriculum and program offerings to fit with our new faculty hires and the needs of our growing student body.

This year, HMS is continuing to offer some amazing opportunities for students. In addition to student travel grants, HMS is expanding the Health Equity Internship program offered through the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh

Valley. If you are interested in applying for the internship for Spring semester, be sure to check out details of the application process online on the HMS website. This issue of the HMS Messenger also includes several other opportunities for students for summer 2016, so be sure to check out all the possibilities to get involved in promoting health and well-being both here in the local Lehigh Valley community and abroad! For faculty, funding is also available in the form of HMS mini research grants, with the next round of proposals being considered in the Spring.

During the remainder of the fall semester, there will be a number of HMS events to look forward to. In November, we will begin bringing our Community Health candidates to campus, so be sure to attend the candidates' research talks, meals, and other meeting opportunities. We value the input of both

HMS faculty and students – be a part of the future in shaping who we recruit to our program! Also, on November 19th, Ellen Lawton, the Director of the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnerships at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University will be visiting campus and hosting some workshops and talks revolving around how to create a healthier Lehigh Valley, as many of the barriers to health facing our community members may have roots in injustice and discrimination.

Over the past several weeks, HMS social media consultant, student Rachel Abramowitz has been working hard to develop the HMS presence on Facebook and Instagram, so be sure to follow these for important updates!

*-Kelly Austin*

## Upcoming Conference Submission Deadlines:

- Eastern Psychological Association submission deadline for their annual conference is November 15. Here is a webpage for the conference: <http://www.easternpsychological.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3501>
- Eastern Sociological Society submission deadline for their annual conference is Oct 31. Here is the webpage: <http://www.essnet.org/annual-meeting/>

## Awards Received!

- Professor **Jesseca Marsh** won the 2015 Lehigh University College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Award in Teaching. Please give a big congratulations to Professor Marsh!
- Professor **Kelly Austin** won the 2015 Lehigh University Frank Hook Assistant Professorship, which recognizes faculty who foster strong mentoring relationships with students.



## Curricular Highlights

Several new changes are taking shape with HMS courses & curriculum...

- Introduction to Public Health will now be offered every fall and every spring!
- This spring, Dr. Bonnie Coyle will be offering a new course on Food, Medicine and Public Health (HMS 395)
- Professor Pete Costa will offer Peer Health Adviser Training again the spring – students take advantage!
- Professor Burke's PSYC 302: Stress and Coping course will soon be officially cross-listed with HMS, but can still be taken in the spring for HMS credit.



**“The HMS program at Lehigh was instrumental in shaping my career interests and passions in public and global health. It was through my HMS courses that I was exposed to these fields and it was the HMS professors that inspired me to really take an interest in global health issues, public health systems, gaps in health outcomes, and issues with access to healthcare. For me, the HMS program offered an enlightening, interdisciplinary approach to health that ended up really influencing my passions and career path.”**

- Katie Zabronsky, Political Science Major ('15)

## Ghana: A Student's Experience Continued

*Continued from page 1...*

I found out that mental health care is intimately linked with traditional religions and that local traditional-religion healers play a large role in the care and treatment of the mentally ill. I took what I learned in these ten days back to the US and wrote a proposal to do further research on the subject. I am now currently applying for grants to carry out research on traditional religion and mental health care on a community level.

The trip made me more open to exploring and assimilating into new cultures and strengthened many personal characteristics. Previously my travel experience was limited to paradise vacations during which I had virtually no contact with the social environ-

ment of the country that I was visiting. Instead I lived in Ghana very much like a Ghanaian. I ate the cuisine from the local market, relied on public transportation, and formed friendships with many of the residents. The experience taught me to be open-minded about foreign cultures and different perspectives; rather than compare foreign ways of life or ideas to my own. I learned to accept them as unique and to integrate new perspectives into my own outlook.

Through the trip I became a more confident international traveler. At first, I was so lost by myself that I was afraid to leave the hostel without one of the program leaders. After a few weeks I could go into the city by myself to explore without getting lost.

After five weeks I successfully navigated through the bustling transport hubs of three major cities (in three separate regions) in ten days, totally independently.

Other skills and characteristics that were positively influenced by the foreign travel were communication and negotiation skills, planning and decision-making skills, and self-reliance. I had an extraordinary time travelling through Ghana discovering a new culture. Every day doing something different was a new adventure. I would recommend a culture-focused and more independent travel program to anyone interested in learning more about the world and about themselves.

*By Hugh Bartlett  
Biological Sciences Major ('17)*

**“The experience taught me to be open-minded about foreign cultures and different perspectives; rather than compare foreign ways of life or ideas to my own.”**

## Meet the Faculty... Professor Sirry Alang!



**Dr. Sirry Alang**

**Assistant Professor of  
Sociology &  
Health, Medicine, and  
Society**

***“The decision to pursue a career that focuses on improving conditions necessary for health especially among underserved populations was an easy one for me.”***

I obtained my Ph.D. in Health Services Research, Policy and Administration from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. When I was growing up in Cameroon, much of public health revolved around HIV/AIDS - the disproportionate vulnerability of women, lack of access to medication, stigma and excess death from AIDS-related complications. I quickly became interested in why health, sickness, and health care resources were not equally distributed. The decision to pursue a career that focuses on improving conditions necessary for health especially among underserved populations was an easy one for me.

My first public health experiences in the United States further strengthened my interests. I did a research practicum at St. Luke’s Community Health Department in Bethlehem, PA when I was studying in the master’s program in Sociology here at Lehigh. As I analyzed survey data from the south side community, I wondered how it was possible that in a nation with so many advances in health, many people had poor health outcomes, and their health varied with the social groups to which they belong. What is it about the way a society is organized, people’s social conditions and position

that determine whether they get sick, die, access good quality care or any care at all, and benefit from a policy or new health technology? And how can we change things for better? These questions led me to the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota where I obtained both a masters and a doctoral degree from the Department of Health Policy and Management.

During my time in the school of public health, I was trained to conduct research specific to health, health services (access, delivery, and management), and health policy. I had a chance to begin exploring my research interests - how social, political, and health services factors influence health. My doctoral dissertation investigated how the social conditions of African Americans residing in an urban disadvantaged neighborhood affected their mental health, identified the kinds of resources that helped in dealing with stress from poor social conditions, and explored how culture shaped the ways in which mental health problems were expressed.

I have also had the opportunity to be directly involved in public health practice at local and state government levels. I was analyst with the Hennepin County Public

Health Department, where I coordinated the assessment of needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, the prioritization of HIV/AIDS services, and the allocation of federal funds to services in the state of Minnesota. I had the opportunity to work with federal agencies such as the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA) HIV/AIDS Bureau, and the Office of Minority Health Resource Center.

My second coming to Lehigh gives me a chance to continue to explore how health is socially distributed, how to transform adverse social conditions to ones that are more beneficial to health, and how to inform local, state and federal policy to improve population health outcomes. I look forward to teaching courses in health-related research, public health practice and policy, courses that identify the mechanisms through which health and disease are created and distributed, as well as courses in issues such as HIV/AIDS and community mental health that I am particularly interested in. Most importantly, I am excited about opportunities to work directly with the local and wider community on efforts to reduce health inequities and improve overall health.

*By Professor Sirry Alang*

## HMS Student Conference Travel Grants

**Student Travel Grants** are awards of up to \$200 intended to help support HMS student travel to conferences and workshops on topics relevant to Health, Medicine and Society. For more information and to download an application, visit: <http://hms.cas2.lehigh.edu/node/87>

## Iacocca Internship opportunity focused on Public Health in Rural Uganda...

**Hey Students!** Looking for an Iacocca Internship Experience this summer that has a public health component? Consider interning for Pathways Development Initiative (PDI) in Bududa, Uganda for 8 weeks this summer. Interns will develop and implement health education on topics such as hygiene and hand washing, HIV and malaria prevention and awareness, diarrhea, and dental hygiene to primary and secondary school children. To find out more information and apply for placement with PDI in Uganda or other opportunities of interest, please contact Professor Kelly Austin at [kellyaustin@lehigh.edu](mailto:kellyaustin@lehigh.edu)



## Food, Health & Sustainability Internship Opportunity in the Lehigh Valley

The industrialized food system harms farmers, farmworkers, and their families, contaminates our air, soil, and water; and undermines the health of the people who eat it — and has a huge global-warming impact. This serious public health issue is often overlooked or ignored. Rethink the System, **Work for change here in the Lehigh Valley.**

- This internship will involve the following types of activities: Examining research showing the effects of the industrialized food system; Developing ways to reduce waste; Working for surplus food to be donated to local agencies and all remaining food waste to be composted; Taking action to raise both public & professional awareness; Working with community and campus organizations to develop and implement strategies for current and long-term sustainability of food services; Writing articles or speak to groups on various aspects of sustainability in food services.
- This internship is offered for academic credit. Internships generally require 12 hours per week plus some form of written or oral report. For more information about Alliance internships, go to: [internships.sustainlv.org](http://internships.sustainlv.org) or contact Professor Austin at [kellyaustin@lehigh.edu](mailto:kellyaustin@lehigh.edu)

**Hey Students!**  
**Thinking about**  
**summer 2016**  
**yet??? Take**  
**advantage of**  
**these amazing**  
**summer**  
**opportunities!!!**

## Grants for Experiential Learning in Health

The Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business & Economics, and Engineering and Applied Sciences together support **awards of up to \$4,000 per student for summer** experiential learning activities in health for 2016. An experiential learning activity is an independent, hands-on research, or real world experience that advances the student's understanding of health or health care. For example, a student might shadow a physician in a hospital, intern in a health insurance company, take on a research project at the Lourdes Center for Public Health, volunteer for a NGO with a health mission, conduct oral histories of cancer patients, enter the genetic engineering competition, or conduct health-related research in a laboratory. The intent of this program is to give students an opportunity to develop and experience a unique learning activity that will broaden and deepen their knowledge of some aspect of health or health care. This experience must take place between mid-May and mid-August, 2016. Proposal are due on Jan 24, 2016 via the online submission systems. For more information, please visit: <https://gelh.cas2.lehigh.edu/> or contact Professor Kelly Austin at [kellyaustin@lehigh.edu](mailto:kellyaustin@lehigh.edu) with questions.



## Recent Faculty Publications

**Alang, Sirry M.**, McCreedy, E. M., and McAlpine, D. D. 2015. "Race, Ethnicity, and Self-Rated Health Among Immigrants in the United States." *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 1-8.

**Austin, Kelly F.** 2015. "Dependency, Urban Slums, and the Forgotten Plagues: A Cross-National Analysis of Tuberculosis and Malaria in Less-Developed Nations." *Sociological Perspectives* 58(2): 286-310.

Cooper, J. A., and **Marsh, Jessecae K.** 2015. "The Influence of Expertise on Essence Beliefs for Mental and Medical Disorder Categories." *Cognition* 144: 67-75. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2015.07.016

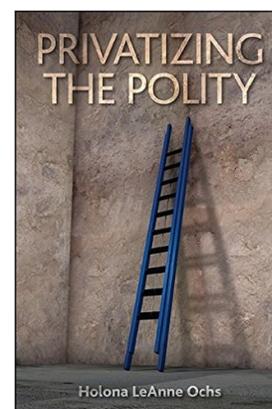
LaBrie, J. W., Boyle, S., and **Napper, Lucy E.** 2015. "Alcohol Abstinence or Harm-Reduction? Parental Messages for College-bound Light Drinkers." *Addictive Behaviors* 46: 10-13. doi: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2015.02.019.

LaBrie, J. W., **Napper, Lucy E.**, Grimaldi, E. M., Kenney, S. R., & Lac, A. 2015. "The Efficacy of a Standalone Protective Behavioral Strategies Intervention for Students Accessing Mental Health Services." *Prevention Science* 16(5): 663-673. doi: 10.1007/s11121-015-0549-8

**Lasker, Judith N.** 2015. "International Health Volunteering; Understanding Organizational Goals." *Voluntas; International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. DOI: 10.1007/s11266-015-9661-4

**Marsh, Jessecae K.**, **Burke, Christopher T.**, and De Los Reyes, A. 2015. "The Sweet Spot of Clinical Intuitions: Predictors of the Effects of Context on Impressions of Conduct Disorder Symptoms." *Psychological Assessment* doi:10.1037/pas0000173

**Ochs, Holona LeAnne.** 2015. *Privatizing the Polity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.



2015 Annual Meeting and Exposition: Happening Now!  
Oct 31—Nov 4 in Chicago!

## HMS Steering Committee Faculty

**Kelly Austin** | Director of Health, Medicine and Society | Assistant Professor of Sociology

**Sirry Alang** | Assistant Professor of Sociology and Health, Medicine and Society

**Christopher Burke** | Director of Community Health Research Group | Assistant Professor of Psychology

**Stephen Cutcliffe** | Director of Science, Technology, & Society Program | Professor of History

**Dena Davis** | Presidential Endowed Chair in Health, Humanities and Social Sciences | Professor of Religion Studies

**Elizabeth Dolan** | Associate Professor of English

**Judith Lasker** | NEH Distinguished Professor | Professor of Sociology

**Linda Lowe-Krentz** | Director of Biochemistry | Professor of Biological Sciences

**Jessecae Marsh** | Assistant Professor of Psychology

**Lucy Napper** | Assistant Professor of Psychology and Health, Medicine and Society

## An HMS Intern's Experience at the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley

The Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley is a non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of the local population through numerous programs. These programs are designed to help various age groups ranging from mothers and children, to senior citizens. Despite the different programs, they all have the common goal of promoting self-sufficiency among the clients.

Within the Hispanic Center, my internship placement is at the food pantry under the direction of Bennie Khamneh. The work that I do consists of making sure that everything is up and running smoothly for the third Saturday of every month, which is the day the food pantry is open to the public. The food pantry is a resource offered to the community providing food to those in the 18015 district. The pantry receives donations from local food providers like Sands Casino, Sam's Club, Second Harvest,

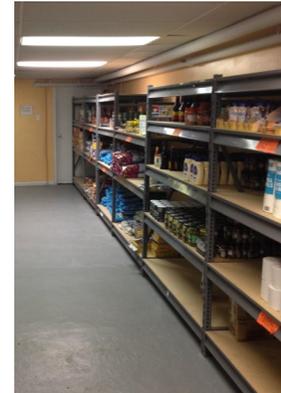
and Grow Row. These donations are assorted through, organized, and distributed the day that the food pantry is open. I also input client information into a database allowing us to look further into patterns in food insecurity that is happening in the local area.

Because the food pantry operates from a grant that was given to the Hispanic Center, there is a lot of paperwork that happens behind the scenes. This paperwork includes recording the amount of food that was donated to the food pantry for that month, tracking the number of overall families that come to the food pantry every month, and tracking the number of new families that come to the food pantry. All of these numbers are needed for reports that are sent out to the companies that we receive donations from.

Working with the food pantry at the Hispanic Center has been such a great experi-

ence for me. I have learned so much about the issue of food insecurity in such a short period of time that is only going to help me in my future career path as I hope to pursue a Master's in Public Health. The staff that I work with are so helpful, and willing to guide me through working in a public health environment. I have learned of the immense amount of hard work that is needed to keep an organization like the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley up and running. I am also learning about the real barriers people in low income areas face to accessing affordable and healthy foods, and the challenges of getting fresh foods in food pantries. I have only great things to say about the food pantry, and the Hispanic Center as a whole, as they make it their main priority to help the local community.

*By Amina Affina  
Sociology Major (16')*



**Interested in  
interning at the  
Hispanic  
Center for  
Spring 2016?  
Apply for an  
HMS Health  
Equity  
Internship! See  
the HMS  
website for  
details!**

## Pete Costa: Working to Combat Rabies

The 26th annual Rabies in the Americas Conference (RITA) was held in beautiful Fort Collins, Colorado, during October 4-9, 2015. RITA is an annual international conference where research scientists, academics, students, public health officials, veterinary professionals, rabies program directors, and others have the opportunity to meet, discuss, and present the latest research in the fight

against rabies worldwide.

I had the pleasure of moderating the session on "Communication and Cultural Aspects of Rabies" which included, among others: a presentation by CDC regarding the development of a country risk classification system for travelers to rabies endemic areas; an overview by the Pan American Health Organization on the development of electronic tools and

applications for training healthcare workers in Latin America on appropriate post-exposure rabies prophylaxis; and a talk given by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency on the transition of rabies control activities from the federal to provincial level.

Rabies is a global public health problem impacting humans, companion animals, livestock, and wildlife.

The RITA conference pro-

vides unparalleled opportunities for learning about the latest research developments and networking with colleagues from around the world. Through meetings like RITA, we can play a role in reducing the burden of rabies worldwide.

*By Professor Peter Costa*

YOU'VE BEEN READING...

## THE HMS MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL  
NEWSLETTER OF

HEALTH, MEDICINE  
AND SOCIETY

Please send any requests,  
recommendations, or items  
for the HMS Messenger or  
HMS website to:

Professor Kelly Austin  
Director, Health, Medicine,  
and Society Program  
kellyaustin@lehigh.edu

All of the events and  
opportunities  
presented in this  
newsletter are also  
posted on the new  
HMS website!

Check it out at:  
[http://  
hms.cas2.lehigh.edu/](http://hms.cas2.lehigh.edu/)

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## Spring 2015 HMS Courses

HMS, REL, AAS, GS, WGSS 097 **Engineering the Impossible** 4 credits (HU); Professor Driscoll M,W; 11:10-12:45 p.m.

HMS, ENG 115-10 **Literature of Contagion** 4 credits (HU); Professor Dolan M,W; 8:45 - 10:00 a.m.

HMS, STS, HIST 118-10 **History of Modern Medicine** 4 credits (HU); Professor Smith T,TR; 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.

HMS, SOC 152-10 **Alcohol, Science, and Society** 4 credits (SS); Professor McIntosh M,W,F; 9:10 - 10:00 a.m.

HMS, SOC 162-10 **AIDS and Society** 4 credits (SS); Professor Alang M,W; 2:35 - 3:50 p.m.

HMS 180-10 **Introduction to Public Health** 4 credits (SS); Professor Reed M,W; 8:45 - 10:00 a.m.

HMS, HIST 198-10 **Bring Out Your Dead: Death in American History** 4 credits (HU) Professor Tremper T,TR; 11:10 - 12:25pm

HMS 221-10 **Peer Health Adviser Training** 4 credits (SS) Professor Costa T,TR; 2:35 - 3:50 p.m.

PSYC 302-10 **Stress and Coping** 4 credits (SS) Professor Burke T,TR; 2:35 - 3:50 p.m.

HMS, SOC 316-10 **Social Epidemiology** 4 credits (SS) Professor Alang M,W; 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.

HMS, SOC, GCP, GS 322-10 **Global Health Issues** 4 credits (SS) Writing Intensive Professor Lasker T,TR; 10:45 - 12:00 p.m.

HMS, PSYC, WGSS 334-10 **The Psychology of Body Image and Eating Disorders** 4 credits (SS); Professor Lomauro T; 7:10 - 10:00 p.m.

HMS, PSYC 344-10 **Health Care Reasoning and Decision Making** 4 credits (SS) Professor Marsh M,W; 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.

HMS, PSYC 348-10 **Drugs and Behavior** 4 credits (SS) Professor Napper/Kilp M,W; 2:35 - 3:50 p.m.

HMS 395-10 **Food, Medicine and Public Health** 4 credits (SS) Professor Coyle (prerequisite HMS 180 or HMS 160) T,TR; 10:45 - 12:00 p.m.

## What our Alumni are doing...

### Kathryn Kundrod

Graduated in 2015

*Bioengineer*

Currently enrolled in a PhD program at Rice University, conducting research on developing diagnostic tools for low resource settings.

### Niki Rishi

Graduated in 2015

*Biology*

Halfway completed her HSE degree, she plans to improve access and coverage rates for individuals in the United States

### Samantha Polansky

Graduated in 2015

*Psychology*

Fellow at St. Luke's University Health Network in their community health department. She is also working towards her masters in Sociology.



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