December: A Time to Study, and a Time to Celebrate!

Leaves have turned from green to yellow to brown, and they crunch under your feet on the way to class. The temperature outside has dropped, and we have had the first snowfall of the season. Many of you may still be in a food coma from the Thanksgiving break. Library carrels are full of students studying late into the night, and the printers in the computer labs are going non-stop. This can mean only one very important thing is about to happen: (no, it isn’t your final exams!) it is time for the psychology department annual winter holiday party!

Please come join the fun on Wednesday, December 10th from 12:00 – 2:00 in the Thanatology library (Rosenstock, room 1) for food, treats, games, and incredible prizes! Dr. Wanda Ruffin (see the faculty spotlight this issue) has worked her holiday magic again this year and secured awesome gifts that will be raffled off throughout the party. Rumor has it that there may also be some karaoke opportunities! This is the event of the year, so mark your calendars and start the countdown. All you need to bring is some holiday cheer, and an appetite for food and fun. See you there!

And the Winner Is...

After reviewing a number of submissions from students, faculty, and staff, our new departmental piece of “art” has an official name: Carl. The blue jay is named after Carl Rogers, an influential American psychologist and one of the founders of the humanistic approach. Carl joins Katie, the mallard duck, in their new home under the ficus tree in the department main office. Come by and see the happy couple anytime. We know they will be very good company for each other. Thank you for all of your creative entries! Names that received honorable mention: Frederick, Sigmund, Rumpelstiltskin, and General Lee.
Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Wanda Ruffin

Dr. Wanda L. Ruffin has been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in the Department of Psychology since 1988, first as an adjunct professor, then a full-time faculty member in 1990. Dr. Ruffin holds an M.S.W. and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. She teaches Survey of Clinical, Community, & Counseling Psychology; African American Psychology; Adolescent Psychology; and Psychology of Women; as well as a graduate Thanatology course, African American Perspectives in Death and Dying. She was also instrumental in the development of the African American Studies Minor. Her research interests include funeral and death rituals within the African American community, in particular the New Orleans Jazz Funeral and strengths and resiliency of African American senior citizens 85 years and older. Her current research project, aided by research assistant, Caitlyn Presley '15, is called Treasured Wisdom Initiative: Lessons Learned from Resilient African Americans, and was funded by an SRI grant. It involves videotaped interviews of active and resilient African Americans 85 and older, and is dedicated to understand successful aging. Dr. Ruffin will be presenting a poster on this topic at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP) - 37th Annual Convention in January, 2015. She previously received a NITOP Outstanding Teaching Award for her poster on the New Orleans Jazz Funeral. Over the years, Dr. Ruffin has been actively involved in campus life, advising many student groups, presenting workshops, attending Alternative Spring Break in Whitakers, North Carolina, and maintains a presence on campus and in the community. Dr. Ruffin received the 2012 Service Learning Faculty Award in recognition of her contribution to the integration of service learning into the curriculum by the Maryland-DC Campus Compact.

Dr. Ruffin also serves the Ombudsperson for Hood College. Hood is committed to providing a learning and working environment in which the dignity and worth of every member of the community is emphasized. The Ombudsperson offers a safe place where students, faculty, and staff may speak confidentially about a conflict, and obtain guidance in a candid and authentic manner without fear of reprisal. Efforts are geared towards managing conflict and improving the work environment and the student life experience. If you are interested in taking advantage of these services, please contact Dr. Ruffin at 301-696-3295 or e-mail her at ombuds@hood.edu.

Ms. Denise Rollins (M.A. Thanatology, Spring 2012) writes: In the time that I’ve known Dr. Wanda Ruffin, she has served as my professor, mentor, collaborator, and friend. When I first met Dr. Ruffin, I was new to the Than program and I appreciated her because she barely knew me yet took the time to listen to my goals and dreams and provide valuable perspective and wisdom. Later, as a student in her Than 527 course (African American Perspectives in Thanatology), I became a raving fan as she opened my mind and my eyes to history and information that I continue to use in my work with the dying and the grieving. Than 527 was one of my most rigorous courses, yet a favorite because of its lasting impact. As I prepared to graduate, I was humbled by her recommendation that helped me get into a doctoral program, and I appreciate her continuing encouragement as I move closer to completing my dissertation. Now, I’m delighted to work with Dr. Ruffin professionally as she brings students to visit my family’s funeral home. The reciprocal nature of our relationship is a testament to her personality and the environment Hood fosters between its professors and students. I can’t wait to see the results of Dr. Ruffin’s latest project interviewing seniors. I already know that her study will be informative, interesting, inspiring, and impactful, because I’ve come to learn that Dr. Ruffin is all of those things. Because of her and Dr. Terry Martin, I, too, aspire to one day join the ranks of Hood’s elite faculty. And when I get that chance, I will remember the lady who graciously agreed to have lunch with an inquisitive grad student, and I’ll know from personal experience how one simple act of kindness can forever impact a person’s life! I truly look forward to helping others the way Dr. Ruffin has helped me!

50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act: March on Frederick Weekend

On Friday, September 26th, psychology department faculty and students joined more than 1,000 people and marched through the city of Frederick to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. The march culminated on Hood’s campus, with a keynote address by civil rights activist Julian Bond. The following morning at the Conference on Contemporary Civil Rights Issues, Dr. Wanda Ruffin served as a moderator for a distinguished panel that raised the issue of current mental health service inadequacies. Dr. Diane Oliver served on the conference planning committee, and was on hand to ensure students received verification of attendance for their professors as needed. The weekend ended with a motivational interfaith worship service and gospel fest, with many of our majors participating in the celebration.
In-Depth Reviews and Future Documentation Program

It has been an exciting “In-Depth” semester, as three distinguished presenters provided provocative case studies for review and discussion. In September, Dr. Diane Oliver shared her case of an adolescent male client with Intermittent Explosive Disorder, who was referred for treatment after overturning desks and punching a teacher in his school.

In October, Dr. Wanda Ruffin and her research assistant Caitlin Presley, highlighted life stories and words of wisdom from resilient, elderly African American couples they interviewed as part of Dr. Ruffin’s ongoing research project.

Finally, in November, Dr. Melanie McEntee discussed a case of a 34-year-old married woman diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and detailed the client’s struggles with multiple sexual encounters with other men, and her frantic need for attention and affection.

Stay tuned for more In-Depth sessions in the spring semester, as well as details on a new documentation system for the In-Depth program that will provide you with a mechanism to indicate your attendance at three or more In-Depth sessions as professional development on your growing curriculum vitae. This is a great opportunity for students applying to graduate school. See Dr. Diane Oliver for additional details.

Psychology Club Corner

As a psychology club, we aim to unite students interested in psychology, raise awareness of psychological health concerns, and participate in services aiding the Frederick and Hood communities. So far this semester, we have staffed tables in Whitaker to raise awareness for both depression and Alzheimer’s. Next semester will be exciting for us! We will be hosting a Badminton tournament on February 6th to spread the message “healthy body, healthy mind.” We will also be hosting the annual Autism Walk in April. This is an event that we hold on the Hood College campus, and families of the community may come participate. In addition, we will also be tabling every month to raise awareness about mental health concerns.

If you would like to join Psychology Club or just want to know more about what we do, please email psychoclub@hood.edu. We hope everyone had a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving break!

Psychology Club 2014-2015 Officers: President - Krystal Wood (kaw14@hood.edu), Vice President- Gemma Hunt (glh2@hood.edu), Secretary- Guiliana Burton (grb13@hood.edu), and Treasurer- Jared Ford (jifl@hood.edu).
Spring 2015 Research Opportunities!

Dr. Shannon Kundey
The Comparative Cognition lab is currently seeking research assistants for fall 2014 and spring 2014. Student responsibilities vary from investigating how animals and humans think by performing experiments to inputting and analyzing data. Hours are flexible, and we can work with most schedules. Students of all levels, from first-year to graduated, are welcome. Students contributing significantly to ongoing projects can earn authorship on papers or conference poster presentations. Opportunities are also available to develop and run your own study. Students can volunteer or earn independent study course credit. To participate, contact kundey@hood.edu.

Dr. Elizabeth MacDougall
Students in Dr. MacDougall’s Geriatric Assessment Research Lab (GARL) are continuing to collect data for two projects: (1) Degree of lifetime exposure to religion/spirituality (R/S) as a predictor of health outcomes in older adults, and (2) Psychometric evaluation of R/S assessment tools for use in the older adult population. In addition, we are beginning to review the literature related to a third project entitled, “Assessing, understanding, and meeting the spiritual needs of older adults in nursing homes.” We welcome back 3 students this semester who worked with GARL last year: Mary Hickman, Ingrid Gooch, and Noel Jones, and we are excited to have 3 new students who have joined the lab this year: Danielle Derflinger, Jessica Lastner, and Aubrey Petters! Students in GARL will also be assisting with data management, organization, and storage and with data entry using SPSS. Finally, students will be updating our lab training manual. While the lab is filled for this year, there will be several openings for interested students next year. Feel free to contact Dr. MacDougall or any one of the current GARL research assistants for further information.

Dr. Diane Oliver
Think back to your college application process…what was that experience like for you? Did you feel prepared for the standardized tests, secure completing the Common Application, ready to make the most of your interviews, familiar with financial aid options, and confident about assessing best fit colleges for your individual needs, especially if you have learning differences or other issues that create unique challenges to college stress and demands? Many high school students and their families are quickly overwhelmed with the process of applying to college, and the stress and uncertainty can make this a difficult time for everyone involved. Other students, especially those working with independent college advisors, have exposure to these very issues early in their high school years, and these students can experience tremendous personal growth and empowerment through the college application process. Dr. Oliver has begun a new line of research inquiry into psychosocial factors associated with college advising and the application process. She has teamed up with two colleagues, and will be securing grant funding this spring to offer an advising “boot camp” for high school juniors this summer. She needs three additional students to assist with this research and program development this spring. Students can also participate in her CHIPPERS (Children’s Perceptions of Religion and Spirituality Study) lab on a volunteer basis or for independent study credit. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Oliver at oliver@hood.edu.

Wanda L. Ruffin
Treasured Wisdom Initiative (TWI): Lessons Learned from Resilient African American Seniors is a project that incorporates a qualitative research design consisting of individual, videotaped interviews with African Americans 85 years and older, in order to gather information and words of wisdom from this under-studied population. The initial project was funded by a Hood College 2014 Summer Research Institute Grant. This summer, Caitlin Presley ’15, Research Assistant, traveled to Gulfport, MS with Dr. Ruffin where they conducted interviews in participants’ homes or senior centers. Referrals came from churches, family members and friends, the Department of Aging, and other programs serving older adults. In addition, in-person interviews were conducted in Florida, Maryland, & South Carolina. Phone interviews took place in New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas. So far, we’ve interviewed over 70 seniors. Interviews will continue until the end of this academic year. Students are needed and can participate in several aspects of this project during the spring semester: conduct a literature review on African American seniors, contact individual interviewees for both phone and in-person interviews, code and analyze data received, conduct phone interviews, conduct in-person interviews with Dr. Ruffin, create and maintain a website that will document and provide words of wisdom from the participants. Interested students should contact Wanda Ruffin at 301-696-3761 or wruffin@hood.edu, and be willing to participate in several training sessions.

Dr. Jason Trent
Dr. Trent is currently looking for student researchers. His current research focuses on person perception, particularly how certain characteristics of the perceiver and the perceived may affect evaluations. For instance: What makes a person seem trustworthy? Dr. Trent is also looking forward to helping students develop their own research interests, and will soon be looking into working with a student for the Summer Research Institute. Students interested in any of these opportunities please e-mail Dr. Trent at Trent@hood.edu.