

# Department of Sociology & Criminology

The Department of Sociology & Criminology (SC) utilizes interdisciplinary and applied approaches to address and examine social concerns from a modern, scientific, and analytical perspective. We prepare students for participation in a global community. Crime, violence, poverty, social welfare, social justice, and global demography, criminal & antisocial behaviors, and environmental influences represent a small portion of the department's diverse academic pursuits, knowledge, and faculty. The criminology and sociology programs are a blend of academic theory and real-world experience with former criminal defense investigators, attorneys, and a diverse faculty from around the globe including Iran, India, and South Korea. This allows our students a unique opportunity to obtain first-hand knowledge from those who have experienced it. With over 30 years of combined real-world experience in the criminal justice system, our faculty offers more than theory.

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# Department Chair

Departmental Chair for Sociology & Criminology

Department Chair

# Dr. Kenneth Balusek



## Contact Information

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## Departmental Chair of Sociology & Criminology

### Biography

Ken Balusek is an Associate Professor of Criminology and the Chair of the Department of Sociology & Criminology. He served as Chair of the Department of Politics, Justice, & Society and Associate Chair of the Department of Psychology, Justice, & Society at Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri before joining Arkansas State. A native Texan, Dr. Balusek received his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University. Prior to earning his doctorate in CJ and entering academia, he practiced law for approximately fifteen years. His practice consisted primarily of criminal defense in Federal and state courts. This experience gives him a unique perspective on the Criminal Justice System, and he brings this experience to the classroom to share with his students.

Dr. Balusek's research and teaching interests include criminology, biosocial criminology, corrections, psychopathy, program evaluation, statistics, and research methodology. His first book, *Offender Reentry and Cognitive Intervention: Propensity Score Matching Utility for Outcome Assessment* (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of a cognitive intervention program offered to offenders in the Texas prison system. Other publications and presentations involve tests of criminological theories, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), other evaluations of programs, as well as public perceptions of crime and crime rates. He is currently working on a proposal for a textbook on biosocial criminology as well as a test of Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic (ENA) theory using a sample of incarcerated offenders.

Dr. Balusek is married to Stephanie, has two grown sons, Bryce and Brent, and two dogs, Buster and Millie. In his free time, he enjoys golfing, watching sports, and doing jigsaw puzzles. He looks

forward to leading the Department of Sociology & Criminology and working with the outstanding faculty and staff.

## Education

Ph. D. Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University, Texas

Juris Doctor, The Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Michigan

B.S. Criminal Justice, Texas State University, Texas

## Courses Taught

Introduction to Criminal Justice

Criminology

Corrections

Research Methods in Criminal Justice

Statistics

Juvenile Delinquency

Psychopathy

Sex Crimes: Theory, Practice, and Policy

## Research Interests

Criminological Theory

Corrections

Correctional Programming

Crime Trends

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)

# Sociology Faculty

Sociology faculty members

# Dr. Sanjeev Acharya



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Associate Professor of Sociology

Faculty Advisor - Alpha Kappa Delta

## Education

- Ph.D. in Medical Sociology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 2020
- M.A. in Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, 2015
- B.A. in Sociology and English, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, 2010

## Teaching Specialties:

- Medical Sociology
- Introduction to Sociology
- Research Methods
- Sociological Theory
- Sociological Literacy
- Sports and Society

## Research Interests

- Health Disparities

- Global Health
- SES and Health
- Gender and Health
- Quantitative Methods

## Biography

Sanjeev Acharya received his Ph.D. in Medical Sociology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research interests lie in health disparities, global health, socioeconomic status and health, gender and health, and quantitative methods. His research collaborations appear in *The Lancet – EclinicalMedicine*, *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Disparities*, *Reproductive Health*, and *The Journal of Psychology*. He is a member of American Sociological Association, Population Association of America, and Mid-South Sociological Association. He also serves as a peer-reviewer in the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.

Aside from his teaching role, Sanjeev likes to meditate, explore the wonders of nature, learn the mysteries of our universe, and play guitar.

# Dr. Veena Kulkarni



## Contact Information

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Associate Professor of Sociology

Graduate Program Coordinator

## Biography

Veena Kulkarni joined Arkansas State University after completing her Ph.D in Sociology with specialization in Demography and Development from University of Maryland –College Park. Her research interests lie at the intersections of studying social and economic inequalities with the focus on labor market processes and indicators, health and educational outcomes in the context of developing and developed countries. Her work has appeared in peer reviewed journals such as Demography, International Migration Review, International Review of Applied Economics, Journal of Developing Areas, Social Science Research, Sociological Forum, World Development and as book chapters published by the Sage Publication and Oxford University Press. She is presently working on a book manuscript, 'Indian Immigrants in Developed Democracies: A Cross-National Study', to be published by Routledge as part of the 'Routledge Studies of Diasporic Peoples'.

## Education

Ph.D., University of Maryland-College Park (Sociology)

M.A., Delhi University (Economics)

Teaching Specialties  
Population & Development  
Social Demography  
Statistics  
Social Problems  
Research Methods  
Research Interests  
International Migration  
Social Inequalities in Education & Health  
Labor Market Processes & Outcomes

## Affiliations

American Sociological Association  
International Union for the Scientific Study of Population  
Population Association of America

## Recent Publications

- Kulkarni, Veena. 'Household Extension and Earnings among Foreign Born Asian and non-Hispanic White Households', Journal of Family Issues, Forthcoming.
- Rukus, Joseph and Veena Kulkarni. 'Easier Said than Done: Methodological Challenges in Exploring Prevalence of Mental Health Illness among Rural Jail Inmates in the United States', International Journal of Rural Criminology, Forthcoming.  
Kulkarni, Veena, Vani S. Kulkarni and Raghav Gaiha. 'Has Disability Risen among the Elderly in India?', Economic and Political Weekly, Forthcoming.
- Kulkarni, Veena and Douglas F. Barnes. 2017. 'Education in Rural Peru: Exploring the Role of Household Electrification in School Enrollment', Journal of Research in Rural Education, 32(10): 1-19.

# Mrs. Lavonda Evans



## Contact Information

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## Instructor

## SCA Club Faculty Co-Advisor

## Biography

LaVonda Evans grew up in Missouri before moving to Arkansas. Her master's thesis is titled "Beyond the Rhetoric of Homeschool Socialization: An Analysis of the Parental Perspective", and she is a homeschool advocate. During her time at ASU, she was a Graduate Assistant in the Sociology and Criminology Department, successfully published in the International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology, and continues supporting the field as a peer reviewer. LaVonda recently received her certification as a Certified Administrative Professional from the College of Administrative Professionals. She is a pioneer member of the Staff Senate P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee at A-State. She resides in Jonesboro with her husband Rodney. They have 5 children: Kasidy, Kristopher, Kody, Kanon, and Kelley, and an American Bulldog named Max. LaVonda enjoys blogging, crocheting, and watching true crime documentaries. Labeled the "department mom" by students and faculty, she is delighted to be a part of an amazing department and is proud to call A-State her second home.

## Education

A.A.S. Criminal Justice - Black River Technical College - 2010

A.A. General Education - Black River Technical College - 2012

B.S.I.S. Interdisciplinary Studies - Criminology, Sociology, & Health - Arkansas State University - 2015

M.A. Sociology - Arkansas State University - 2019

## Credentials

Certified Administrative Professional (APC) - College of Administrative Professionals - 2023

## Courses Taught

SOC 1013 - FYE Making Connections - Sociology & Criminology

SOC 2213 - Introduction to Sociology

SOC 3383 - Social Statistics

CRIM 4243 - Social Justice

CRIM 3183 - Institutional Corrections

CRIM 3423 - Serial Homicide

# Mr. Christopher Pitts



## Contact Information

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Office: HSS 3141D

## Instructor

## Biography

With a diverse background that spans continents, industries, and disciplines, Chris brings a wealth of real-world experience to the study of sociology. Born and raised in Southern California, they were at the forefront of major cultural moments, having attended the first-ever Lollapalooza and Vans Warped Tour festivals. Most of his time was spent surfing, skating, playing sports, or enjoying the day at Mission Beach and the Gaslamp District in San Diego, CA. This was followed by serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. His time as a Marine included Helicopter Mechanic, Crew Chief, and Plane Captain, earning the distinction of "Shellback" after crossing the equator. He also spent time as a marksmanship instructor. This provided a foundational understanding of organizational hierarchy, group cohesion, institutional structures, and an understanding of leadership qualities.

His time in the military offered a passport to the world with time spent in Japan, Hawaii, Thailand, Guam, Kuwait, Indonesia, Mexico, and Singapore, Jebel Ali, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Following his military service, Chris embarked on a winding and varied career path that provides a rich tapestry of sociological insight. He has worked as a Criminal Investigator and a Court Clerk, gaining firsthand practical experience within the justice system. Chris also held roles as a department manager for Walmart and as an investigator for J.B. Hunt. This professional journey also includes ten years as a professional wrestler, an auto body technician, and a DJ, offering unique perspectives on subcultures, identity, and performance. Transitioning into academia, Chris has worked as a College Admissions Counselor, a Graduate Assistant, and an Administrative Specialist, understanding the structures and challenges of higher education from

the inside, giving him a broader well of knowledge and experience to call upon when assisting students. This journey through a multitude of social and professional environments has provided him with practical experience and understanding. Academically, Chris holds M.A. degrees in both Sociology and Criminology. His areas of research focus on childhood development, deviant behaviors, and delinquency / criminal behavior.

## Education

A.A.S. Criminal Justice - Arkansas State University Newport - 2011

A.A.S. Applied Science - Arkansas State University - 2011

B.A. Sociology - Arkansas State University - 2022

B.A. Criminology - Arkansas State University - 2022

M.A. Sociology - Arkansas State University - 2024

M.A. Criminology - Arkansas State University - 2025

## Courses Taught

SOC 2213 - Introduction to Sociology

# Criminology Faculty

Criminology faculty members

# Dr. Angelo Brown



## Contact Information

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[angbrown@astate.edu](mailto:angbrown@astate.edu)

## Biography

Angelo Brown received his master's at Arizona State University and his Ph.D. Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University. His research and teaching in criminal justice and criminology are primarily on policy and policing from a comparative and intersectional perspective. Dr. Brown is a member of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences and a member of the Pullman Police Advisory Board. He is a research associate for the Division of Governmental Studies and Service, analyzing state patrol data. Outside of work, he enjoys mountain biking, martial arts, camping or just about any activity outdoors and in nature, as he spent many years as a camp counselor with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria.

# Dr. Stacy Dewald



## Contact Information

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Office: HSS 3068

## Associate Professor of Criminology

## Biography

Stacy Dewald is an Assistant Professor of Criminology in the department of Sociology and Criminology. She holds a Ph.D. in Criminology, Law, and Justice from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She previously worked as a legal investigator for a public defender's office. Her research focuses on problem-solving courts, policing, and sexual assault.

## Education

- 2019 Ph.D. Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 2012 M.A. Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
- 1998 B. A. Criminal Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago

## Research Interests

Problem-Solving Courts; Policing; Sexual Assault

## Affiliations

American Society of Criminology (ASC) - Division on Policing

Southern Criminal Justice Association

Midwestern Criminal Justice Association (MCJA)

American Society of Evidence-Based Policing (ASEBP)

Indigent Defense Research Association

Alpha Phi Sigma

## Recent Publications

**Dewald, S.**, Honegger, L., DuBois, S., Crndall, M., and Sopcic--Hilderbrand, Jaclyn. (2024). Collaboration of University Research and Problem-Solving Court: Lessons and Perspectives. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 37(1), 82-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2024.2306351>

Honegger, L., & **Dewald, S.** (2023). Making a Case for Gender-Responsive, Trauma-Informed Mental Health Courts: An Exploration of Participant Trauma Histories. *Journal of Forensic Social Work*, 7(1), 72-90. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.1936-9298.2023.7.1.72-90>

**Dewald, S.** (2023). Detectives and technological frames: Integrating technology and social media into everyday work. *Policing & Society*, 33(1), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2064858>

**Dewald, S.** (2022). "So, you can let me look at your phone?": Detectives obtaining consent to search cell phones. *Journal of Criminal Justice & Law*, 5(2). <https://jcjl.pubpub.org/pub/v5i2ryuircnx>

Criminology Faculty

# Dr. Margaret Mahoney

Dr. Margaret Mahoney



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## Biography

Dr. Mahoney (pronouns: she/her/hers) earned her Ph.D. in 2017 from the University of Delaware. Her research and teaching emphases center around gender, crime, and victimization. Her dissertation research examined the concepts of rurality, social control, and victimology. Specifically, she looked at the reporting behaviors of physical assault victims and the response time of police officers to these reported assaults. Dr. Mahoney lives in Minot, North Dakota.

# Degree Plans

Current degree plans offered

# Internships

# Path to the Pack

Request information about department, programs, and enrollment into the criminology and sociology.

Path to the Pack

# Recruiting Application

Path to the Pack

# Dr. Banafsheh Aghayeeabianeh



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Office: HSS 3081

Assistant Professor of Sociology

SCA Club Faculty Co-Advisor

## Biography

Dr. Banafsheh Aghayeeabianeh joined Arkansas State University in Fall 2022 after completing her Ph.D. in April 2022 from the University of Kentucky. Banafsheh's work focuses on the influence of sociopolitical factors on young adults and families. In particular, she is interested in the impact of political violence and civil society suppression on youth outcomes. To study this, she uses cross-national approaches. Aside from the research, Banafsheh enjoys teaching, primarily introductory courses. She likes seeing students' progress in the class and the joy of content.

# Criminology & Sociology Student Success

Here we celebrate those students that display exemplary success in college and beyond. Our department focuses on helping our students succeed no matter where their individual walks through may take them. We provide our students with the skills they need whether that be in the classroom, boardroom, or playing field.

# 2024-2025 Academic Year- Student Athletes



A full-page action shot of Arkansas State football player #73. He is wearing a white jersey with orange and black accents, a black helmet with orange and black stripes, and a black face mask. He is pointing forward with his right hand, which has a white wristband. The jersey features the Adidas logo, the SEC logo, and the text "ARKANSAS STATE" and the number "73". He is in a defensive stance, with his left hand on his hip and his right hand pointing forward. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# JACOB BAYER

CENTER-BUFFALO BILLS



ARKANSAS STATE FOOTBALL



*State*

On, On, On to Victory! Brave team you're second to none! Let's make this game history along with the others we've won. FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! with all your might so that the world may see that BFG-9000 is a winner Without a Doubt!

