

Presenting on subjects as diverse as the Joker from the *Batman* franchise to racial issues in mainstream media, two Division of Sociology and Anthropology graduate students and one faculty member presented papers at the first annual International Crime, Media and Popular Culture Studies Conference at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN, October 5 – 7, 2009.

Sponsored by the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Indiana State University, the conference was established to encourage cross-disciplinary exchanges between academic scholars and practitioners engaged in research and teaching of crime, media and popular culture.

“Given the increased role of the media and popular culture in our understanding of crime, deviance and the justice system,” said Dr. Franklin Wilson, founding chair of the conference, “It is my hope that we begin to look at how this area of study plays a role not only in our intellectual growth but also in how it can influence policy in the future.”

Graduate student Jake Stump’s conference paper was aimed at showing just that, as it addressed media coverage of a 2007 hate-torture case in Charleston, WV by two newspapers. Jason Rine’s presentation on media construction of villains in comic books also addressed social issues connected to the view of offenders as being ‘evolutionary throw backs.’

Dr. Larry Nichols, Professor of Sociology, presented a paper analyzing the overrepresentation of white-collar crimes among mainstream media outlets and the effects of that upon society.

A third graduate student, Thomas Wytiaz also attended the conference, but did not present. The conference gave all three students an opportunity to interact and network with professionals from their perspective field, and their travel and conference registration costs were supported by monies from the Division and the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences.

For more information on the conference or the presentation, e-mail Dr. Nichols at larry.nichols@mail.wvu.edu.