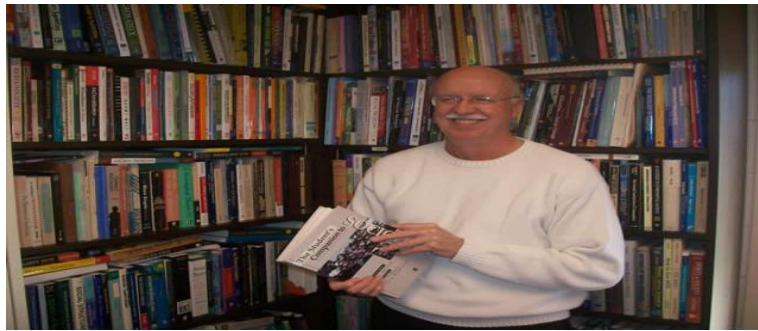


Valdosta State University
Senior Capstone-Sociology 4990

Dr Chet Ballard

Fall Semester 2013

Innovative Each One Reach One Project



“You have learned a lot, and your challenge with your sociology degree is to go out and be a ‘do gooder.’ If you can create a one-size-fits-all product, you will be able to help solve problems around the world.”

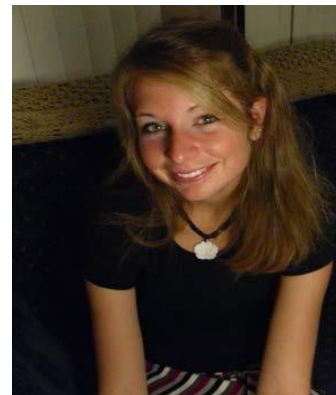
Class Discussion

John Isom's Book

“Graduating With Honors: If I Can, U-Can!”

By

John (The U-Can! Man) Isom & Mandie Gossage



Nov 1, 2013 9:30 AM - Nov 9, 2013 11:59 PM

“In this discussion forum post experiences, stories or accounts which you would share with prospective students considering making a decision to select Valdosta State. *John's book will be a recruitment tool* for VSU and he seeks positive stories and experiences for inclusion in his book and may use your posting. You have a week (discussion open until November 9th) to post to this discussion form. I will replace your lowest discussion forum grade with a grade of 100 for posting to this forum, plus you get a chance to help John with his book. Best, Chet Ballard”

1. **David Johnson:** Honestly, at first I did not like Valdosta State University because it was the first time I was in the deep south and it was too hot for me especially being from New York, but this school has molded my perspective in life to a degree that allows me to critical think in a level I did not have before. The teaching I received was excellent for the most part especially in the Sociology, Anthropology, and Philosophy departments. I would say it was destiny to come here and add this experience in my life., because if I did not come to Valdosta State University I would not be the man I am today.
2. **Ronda Tucker:** I would say that Valdosta State University is a great place for a non-traditional student like me to either start their education or to complete it. I came to VSU in the fall of 2010 after having been at University of Georgia twenty two years prior. I only had completed three years there and lacked one more year. They were on the quarter system and my major was Sociology. However, I did not do my best while there. My young, wild, and free days put a dent in my educational pursuits. I did manage to perform much better at VSU, partly because my focus had changed, and partly because the university is set up to help you succeed. I am now graduating after so many years later, but am very grateful for my experience while here.
3. **Brittany Peeler:** I must say Valdosta State is a very helpful school. The employees that work here will help you as much as possible to see improve and grow as a student, then later use your knowledge and apply it to your career. Im very grateful to soon become an Alumni of this great school....)
4. **Jessica Bostick:** You have never experienced teaching at its finest until you've met Dr. Carl Hand and this does not include even taking a class with him. When I say that I was literally petrified and scared to death to take a statistics course, I am actually grossly under exaggerating how scared I actually was. My fear was so real that I probably ended up delaying myself from graduating when I was actually supposed to. Instead of taking statistics when I first transferred to VSU, I delayed it and decided to take it in the Fall of my Senior year, instead of my Junior year like I should have. I took it the Fall of '12 and ended up dropping the course due to my anxiety about the course and delayed myself from graduating on time because it was a prerequisite for taking two more courses. I ended up taking it in Maymester with Dr. Carl Hand and I never regret. it. He explained the content in any easy to understand way, prepared us fully for our exams, and graded us in a fair and concise manner. He would literally help every student in the stats lab portion and answered all of our questions. He is the only reason why I ended up making a very high grade in that course.

5. **Nakia Brown:** My most positive experience at VSU has been with Dr. Beverly Richardson Blake, she is an advisor in the Oasis department. From the beginning she has been very friendly, helpful and gone out of her way to help me in whatever area I had questions about, sometimes even just lending an ear to listen. That is why I stayed with her as my advisor for practically my whole time at VSU. She is a great person and a great advisor.
6. **Spencer Van Horn:** I have no complaints about VSU. My best experience, was finding what I love to do. The career service staff helped me find Blaze FM and that it they are open to any and all students to go be on the radio. If I had not gone to the career service office, I would have not found Blaze FM and would not be doing my sports radio show at Talk 92.1. The staff and program at Blaze FM are to think as well for their open doors to a student who had no experience or knowledge of radio beforehand. I am on my way to doing what I love for the rest of my life thanks to the career services office and Blaze FM group.
7. **John Ulm:** Over the past four years I've spent my time enrolled at Valdosta State University and it has been a inspiring ride as well as a wild ride. I've been around the block once or twice and have changed my major numerous times to suit my current desires. I'm currently about to graduate with bachelors in sociology, but plan to continue the following semester by going into the speech program. My main advise that I want to tell upcoming students to VSU is to really think about what direction your in before you enroll at VSU. Don't let your senior year be when you finally realize what you want to do, as you'll have wasted a good bit of time. Not to say that if you wait that long is a bad thing, but it would certainly be beneficial to start your planning while in high school or during your first couple of years in college doing your core.
8. **Mary Booker:** I have come to appreciate every professor that I have had here at VSU. Not one single Sociology professor here at VSU has not changed my life in one way or another. I am almost so intrigued by all of the professors in this department that I am neglecting to look at alternate graduate programs because I feel that there is so much more I have to learn from them. Sometimes I wish that this school had a different geographic location, because I do not like living in south Georgia and everything that I have learned here does not coincide with that of the interest of this town/county. Not just professors in the Sociology department have changed my life, but various of my core classes had amazing professors that have even made me ponder on changing to their profession/major. For example, Dr. Taw with the History department, I had him for Counter-culture movements and I truly took away a passion for the course. Also, Dr. Feng with Geology and Geography truly showed me the natural powers that drive our earths functions. Dr. Lovern with Philosophy taught Native American Women and it was an eye-opening, jaw dropping, and inspirational experience. I truly love this school and all that the professors have to offer.
9. **Bryan Smith:** I did not start out my college career in the sociology department, i started as a Computer Science student. I took intro to Sociology early on with David George and he changed the way i viewed things. He may have been one of the best professors that i took just because he challenged his students to stand behind their opinions. I know he is no longer in the department, but it is a great loss to our department. John I have been hearing about this book for a while now, so it better be good. Don't forget to tell people about all the wonderful friends that you have made while at VSU.

10. **Mary Booker, response to Bryan Smith:** I too started out in a different major than Sociology, I was an Art major, and I also took Dr. MARK George for Intro to Sociology as a core requirement, and he changed my life! I was very upset when he left the department. I have heard so many similar stories like ours referring to Dr. George as a major influence in their education choices ultimately to further a career in Sociology.
11. **Steffany Weathers:** When deciding on where to further my education, I thought about many different schools in Georgia. Valdosta State stood out to me for many reasons. As a freshman, I thought it would have been overwhelming to go to a school like UGA where you have 350-400 students. At the same time, I didn't want a school that was too small. VSU definitely fit my personal needs. I was able to be a name and not just a number, but at the same time it was large enough to where I didn't know everyone I see. In addition to that, the professors at this school really care, especially when you are in your major. Many of my professors make it a point to go out of their way to see how things are going and offering help in any way they can. To me, having professors who genuinely care about their students allows one to succeed greatly in their college career. VSU gives you the feel of a big name school with the care and quality that comes from a small campus.
12. **Kayla Johnson:** I was fortunate to build a relationship with Dr. Hand. He always goes above and beyond. I only needed two classes to graduate this semester, this Capstone class, and another class. The other class I needed was full. I explained to the teacher that I do not live in Valdosta, and I needed to get into the class because if not, I would have to stay in Valdosta for another semester just for one class which would be a financial strain. The teacher did not care and said that she would not give me an override into her class. I was stuck in a bind. I was about to drop Capstone and move back to Atlanta, to take my two classes during the Spring semester at Kennesaw State as a transfer student. I spoke with Dr. Hand before I made my final decision. He was able to work his magic. I am currently in another class, but he is going to give me credit as if I was in the original class. He is why I will be graduating in December.
13. **John Isom:** I am happy to be a part of such a great University. Valdosta State University has taken a 25 year Military Veteran and pour 5 years of education into my heart and mind. I would like to share one thing I learned from Faculty and Staff members

Those Who Inspired Me at Valdosta State University

After I moved on to Valdosta State University, I met even more people who inspired, supported, pushed, and encouraged me behind what I ever could have imagined. Here is a list of those people I would like to acknowledge, along with some of the awesome things they said and did. In many cases, the quotes listed are just memorable statements made on the first day of class that made me understand the class's purpose and get fired up for what was to come.

- 1) Dr. Patrick J. Schloss, President of VSU
"Well done! I am proud you are a Blazer. I have come to appreciate that you reap as you sow. You are a magnet for fine people and great efforts. Keep up the great work."
- 2) Dr. Louis H. Levy, Interim President
Dr. Levy took about 10 minutes of his (very valuable) time to share the following with me:
 - He had served his country as an Army Medic a few years ago, and he thanked me for my 25-plus years of service.

- When I asked him what keeps him going, he said, “I like helping people.”
 - He boasted about the excellence of the VSU Student Success Center.
 - He stressed to me the importance of being on a path in life every day.
 - He encouraged me to excel as I followed my path as a VSU Blazer.
 - He shared an attitude about VSU that has inspired me to PUSH even harder.
- 3) Michael F. Adams, President, University of Georgia
After my son Joshua Isom (who currently has a 3.77 GPA) made a smooth transition from VSU to the University of Georgia, Mr. Adams said, “Thank you, Mr. Isom, for sharing your story. I am pleased, but not surprised. If we can ever help with your son, please let me know. Also, thanks for your service to our country.”
 - 4) William J. McKinney, VSU’s 9th President
“You are living through your fallen classmate Sidney Bivins Jr.’s legacy. You’re doing and finishing what he can’t do, graduating college. Now finish strong fall semester 2013 and add to your classmate’s legacy. When you graduate in December 2013, never forget, YOU ARE LIVING THROUGH IT.”
 - 5) Dr. Robin Feeney, ANTH 1102 – Introduction to Anthropology
“John, during your college career and beyond, remember that you will always be developing yourself.”
“John, make sure that in all your college classes, your goal is to GET IT (GI). Be a GI Student.”
“John, U-Can!”
 - 6) Dr. Michael Eaves, COMM 1100 – Human Communication
“John, make sure you realize your communication skills will be a force in your life once you better understand the different fundamentals taught this semester.”
 - 7) Mr. Joel Harper, ENGL 2130 – World Literature
“Civility means that students are expected not only to be civil but to maintain behavior appropriate for a professional environment.”
 - 8) Dr. Mark Groszos, GEOG 1110 – Our Hazardous Environment
“This semester you will learn a lot about the world’s hazardous environment. We have a huge class, and I expect you to be fully engaged. The syllabus is your best friend, so make sure you study it, and be ready to learn as we explore our world.”
 - 9) Dr. Shirley Hardin, Director of African American Studies and Professor of English
Dr. Hardin has been mentoring and inspiring students for 35 years. She challenged me to consider African American Studies as a minor. Her appeal was so moving that I quickly decided to.
 - 10) Ms. Melva Morfau, AFAM 3600 – U.S. Civil Rights Movement
“John, remember that no one knows it all, so come to class with your mind set to learn. You may be shocked at what you hear in this class. However, it is important that you learn as much as you can about your past. Then you can go forward making differences and helping out in the areas you choose.”

- 11) Ms. Ellen Stevens, ECON 1500 – Survey of Economics
“Our economy consists of many moving parts. This class will help expose you to some of our economy’s parts, such as the stock market and other areas that may spark your interest.”
- 12) Dr. Edward Chatelain, GEOL 1122K – Principles of Historical Geology
“You decide to do Standard, Outstanding, Magnificent, or Excellent (SOME) work.”
- 13) Dr. James A. Muncy, PERS 2710 – Exploring Success
“Success is having fun finding and fulfilling your purpose in life.”
- 14) Dr. Ari Santas, PHIL 2010 – Fundamentals of Philosophy
“You have to read a first time and then reread, always reading carefully.”
- 15) Mrs. Lizbeth Heath, SPAN 1001 – Beginning Spanish/Intro to Hispanic Culture I
“You are here to learn a new skill—Spanish. I’m here to help you learn this skill.”
- 16) Mr. Kendrick Dyer, AFAM 3600 – Black Families
“It is very important that you know where you come from and where you are going. Your family history can help you with this process. This class will be dealing with the black family and its many diverse parts. Come to class every day ready to learn.”
- 17) Dr. Kerry Hinkle, PSYC 2500 – Fundamentals of Psychology
“Always remember there are many ways to learn.”
- 18) Dr. Mike Meacham, SOCI 4810 – Intro to Human Services
“John, you are going to do great things in your college journey. Learn all you can, and then go and be a difference maker.”
- 19) Mr. Charles Ward, Instructor of Mathematics and my college mentor spring semester 2011
“John, I am proud of you, and remember to change. You are learning how to learn, and that is the greatest strategy of all—as you learn, you move from one peak to a higher peak for a better view of the whole situation! Keep the faith, my brother—you have only just begun to experience a little of the lot that God has in store for you!”
“Success takes perseverance, ambition, passion, courage, heart, humor, and talent. You have proven you have what it takes to meet challenges, overcome obstacles, and pursue excellence to fulfill a dream. Congratulations on your well-deserved success.”
- 20) Mrs. Caterina M. Orr, AFAM 3000 – Intro to African American Studies
“Make sure your assignments are done on time. Your assignments reflect you, and you should want them to reflect you in a correct manner. This is not an easy A class, but it is a class in which you can earn an A if you do the work and make sure the work is done correctly. The key is doing what the syllabus says and giving your best effort. Then, whether your grade is an A, a B, or a C, you will know you did your best.
- 21) Dr. Carl Hand, SOCI 3500 – Sociological Theory, SOCI 3800 – Social Stratification, SOCI 4800 – Population Problems, SOCI 3000 – Sociological Analysis/Statistics
Sociology and Anthropology Major Outcomes:
 - To familiarize students with sub-disciplines, theories, methods, and core concepts of the discipline they elect to study in the department.
 - To develop in students the ability to apply and utilize the basic quantitative and/or qualitative research and analytical techniques they will need in their professional careers.

- To teach students the literature and database review skills needed to assess and synthesize the state of knowledge available to apply the study of selected issues.
- To support students in the development of the skills required to communicate effectively with people and organizations representing diverse social and cultural backgrounds. This skills include writing, speaking, and computing.

22) Dr. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman, SPAN 2001 – Intermediate Spanish Language/Hispanic Culture I
 “You are expected to be speaking Spanish in class every day. This class is building on your previous two Spanish classes. You will not master the Spanish language, but you will be further along. This is a journey.”

23) Dr. Chet Ballard, SOCI 3650 – Sociology of Sports, SOCI 4990 – Senior Capstone
 “Make sure you come to class with all your assignments completed. We will be having open discussion throughout this semester. Your active participation in class will be based on your preparation before class. Preparation is one of the many keys to success in class and in life. Get in the habit of being prepared.”

“You have learned a lot, and your challenge with your sociology degree is to go out and be a ‘do gooder.’ If you can create a one-size-fits-all product, you will be able to help solve problems around the world.”

Dr. Ballard’s advice led me to create a one-size-fits-all product that could explain what I have been doing since 2009, using U-CAN! as a model. My website, www.johntheucanman.com, serves as footage of me performing U-CAN! in college, and I desire to teach others to do the same!

U- You

C- Capture your message, moments, memories

A- Attack every syllabus with your best effort

N- Never, ever give up!

Performing U-CAN! is my proven recipe for success. Thanks, Dr. Ballard, for once again demonstrating Valdosta State University’s outstanding push to apply what is being taught.

24) Dr. Calvin Walker, AFAM 4700 – African American Studies Seminar

“My philosophy of teaching is to teach the class in the way that I want to be taught. I believe in respecting each student as an individual. I try to help students to empower themselves. I believe that it is my purpose to help a student gain a sense of who he or she is in order to help the student move forward in life.”

25) Dr. Suzanne Slusser, SOCI 3200 – Applied Sociology (shared with Dr. Williams)

“The definition of critical thinking is the ability to evaluate, reason, and question ideas and information while demonstrating awareness of broader social and cultural context.”

26) Dr. Thomas R. Hochschild Jr., SOCI 3510 – Research Methods, SOCI 3090 – Mass Media/Popular Culture

“John, thank you for the nice compliment! Your enthusiasm is contagious. I want to help you in any way I can. Keep it up. If John-can, U-can too!”

“John, thanks for the shout out! It’s been a pleasure to see you apply the things we talked about in class to ‘real life’ phenomena. Your enthusiasm is contagious! Often, it is difficult seeing students ‘go through the motions’ without realizing the important of the material. Having talked

with other faculty about you, I can tell you that your passion and energy are GREATLY appreciated at VSU. You serve as a role model for students and faculty. Let me know if I can help you fulfill your journey in any way.”

27) Dr. Dave Nelson, PERS 2399 – Perspectives on Social Media

“Social media is a tool you can use in so many ways. Make sure you are aware of the different types of ways to effectively use this means to communicate your message.”

28) Mrs. Holly Wright, SOCI 3190 – Clinical Sociology

Wow—our textbook for this class revealed why I give hope! “I expect people have enormous capacity for change.”

29) Mr. Antwan Herron, AFAM 3220 – Studies in African American Literature

“During this semester, I would like for you to be a critical thinker, creative thinker, and innovative thinker as you read your assigned readings. Dig into what you are reading by asking questions of the text. Write down any and all questions before class and add them to our class discussions. This class will be interactive.”

30) Dr. Ginger Macheski, SOCI 4540 – Internship in Sociology

This community-based learning experience is designed to provide:

- An opportunity to apply sociological knowledge and skills in a work setting
- An opportunity to develop work-related knowledge and skills
- Facilitation of exploration of career opportunities
- Encouragement of personal development and self-assessment

31) Dr. Chere L. Peguesse, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Student Success Center

“Thank you, John, for being such a great support and model for what any student can achieve. I’m forwarding your letter to the tutors you’ve named; although I’m sure lots of students are appreciative, we don’t often get that appreciation in writing, and it’s a huge morale booster—thanks again!”

32) Ms. Selenseia Holmes and Mr. Derrick Carter

Ms. Holmes and Mr. Carter are both staff members at VSU who achieved their Bachelors degrees during my five-year journey. They were my inspiration. I saw both of them work while going to school. During my senior year, they both completed their degrees. I could see the results, and I said to myself over and over again, “One day that will be me.”

33) Dr. Maggie J. Viverette, Director of the Office of Social Equity

Dr. Viverette gave me the following charge during my internship interview:

“John, you’ve come a long way, from your 2.07 high school GPA to a current GPA of 3.68. You’ve used our office from day one, back in August 2009. Your website is amazing and innovative in the way that you’ve captured your higher learning journey. John, you will be in high demand, with people across the country inquiring why, when, how, who, and what made you take on this challenge.

“You’ve been telling me for years that you’ve heard and witnessed the obvious problem of African American males not enrolling in or graduating from college. You often spoke with me about how you wanted to be part of the solution to this problem. You now have actions to back up your words, and your story is simply amazing. “You may want to do research and see how the

36 universities in the Georgia Board of Regents are dealing with this issue. Some have created programs to assist. My suggestion is that you consider creating a program or tool VSU can use to attract and retain African American male students. The goal would be for your example, starting and finishing college, to be standard rather than an exception. Your challenge is to create some kind of way for the program or tool to be used after you graduate in December. I think you may be surprised at the outcome of packaging the story contained on your website to inspire other African American males. This is not a command, but it's something you may want to consider for your fall semester internship."



7 December 2013 Graduation Date

**Photo Above taking 6 Nov 2013 (Chamber 101 New Members Meeting)
at the Awesome (Repeat) 5 Star Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber Of
Commerce by:**

Karil Brockington

Senior Director of Administration

Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce

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