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## First David R. Maines research award given

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Scott R. Harris, assistant professor of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at St. Louis University, won the inaugural David R. Maines Narrative Research Award with his paper, "Naturalist and Constructionist Approaches to Equality in Marriage."

Harris' paper focuses on the subject of marital equality and compares naturalist and constructionist approaches to the qualitative study of equality and inequality.

Maines is a professor of sociology and chair of the **Sociology and Anthropology** departments at Oakland University. The **Carl Couch Center for Social and Internet Research**, a non-profit organization that promotes interdisciplinary scholarship in sociological and communication inquiries, issues an annual call for papers to be considered for the award. It was named in Maines' honor because he was one of the first to incorporate narrative and storytelling into sociological research.

"In the 1980's, I was one of the earliest to define narrative research as central to sociology," said Maines, who also received the 2001 Oakland University Foundation Research Excellence Award. "Prior to this development, sociologists relied heavily on statistics. But you oftentimes lose sight of reality through stats. All of the sciences are made up of stories, and people live their lives based on narratives."

Harris will present his paper during the 2003 Midwest Sociological Meetings, which will be held in Chicago April 16-19. He also will receive the Maines Award plaque at that time.

"Harris is a very bright, young and ambitious researcher," Maines said. "The whole point of his research is that you can make assumptions on equality and power distribution in families. But Harris asks the people within those families how they construct their own version of reality. What he's found is that asymmetry does not necessarily mean inequality."

The Maines Award is open to both students and faculty who submit papers that interpret or address Maines' pragmatist approaches, apply Maines' narrative concepts to a social/communication event, develop aspects of Maines' scholarship in new directions, or integrate the humanistic development of narrative and Maines' pragmatist conceptual and theoretical direction. Both single and co-authored works are accepted. Submissions are evaluated by an award review committee, which this year consisted of William Rawlins of Purdue University, Jim Thomas of Northern Illinois University, Jeff Ulmer of Pennsylvania State University and Elaine Jenks of West Chester University.

For more information about the Maines Award and application information, visit the **Carl Couch Center for Social and Internet Research** Web site.

### SUMMARY

Scott R. Harris, assistant professor of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at St. Louis University, won the inaugural David R. Maines Narrative Research Award with his paper, "Naturalist and Constructionist Approaches to Equality in Marriage." The award is named after an OU professor and the chair of Oakland's Sociology and Anthropology departments.

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