



Prolific criminal justice professor

By M. Yvonne Taylor

Don't be fooled by her unassuming demeanor and folksy gift of gab — Professor Joycelyn Pollock is a powerhouse. The Texas State University criminal justice professor is former chair of the department, author of 16 books, recipient of numerous awards and “absolutely brilliant,” says San Marcos Chief of Police Howard Williams.

Williams, a student in Pollock's doctorate-level ethics class who also had the professor for his first master's class, admits that when he met her, “she scared the living daylights out of me. She threw things out that I'd never heard before. And I thought, ‘I'm in way over my head.’”

“She scared me, but I came to realize that she knows all this so well that it just comes off the top of her head. She’s studied hard.”

WHEN THE STUDYING BEGAN

Raised in Mukilteo, Wash., Pollock was the first in her family to go to college when she set foot on the Whitman College campus in Walla Walla, eight hours from home. “Whitman had a great prison program that I’d read about in *Life* magazine,” she explains. And she was fortunate to have the opportunity to study under Lee Bowker, a well-known prison expert in sociology. She even wrote a chapter in one of his books — as an undergraduate — beginning her prolific writing career.

“At the time, I was interested in prisons and drug treatment, and how people can redeem themselves,” she explains. “I wanted to be a probation and parole officer.” She tried her hand at that, taking a leave of absence from school to work as an emergency-hire probation and parole officer.

“The job was eye-opening, especially for a 20 year old, and I really enjoyed the work,” she admits, “but I wanted a bigger platform looking into program evaluation.”

The professor with whom she co-authored the book encouraged her to continue her education. “That’s how I ended up at SUNY-Albany,” she says, “and it changed my life plans.”

THE LIFE OF A SCHOLAR AND PROFESSOR

State University of New York-Albany, as it was then called, “had the biggest names in criminal justice in the country,” says Pollock, who in 2006 received the university’s outstanding alumnus award. “I gradually moved into teaching, and I think it’s the best job in the world. You get to explore various issues, questions and interest in topics, and you get paid for it. And you go into a classroom and create that interest in the next generation.”

After earning her Ph.D., Pollock’s teaching career led her to a position at the University of Houston-Downtown (UH-D), which happened to be located directly across the bayou from the city’s criminal court house system. “I was always bringing my students there,” explains the professor, “and I was able to get great guest speakers for my classes.”

Her interests and research expanded from women in the criminal justice system, prisons and ethics to include law.

While teaching at UH-D, she took time to earn a J.D. from the University of Houston, and she believes that work truly informs what she’s able to bring into the classroom. “Obviously, you don’t learn criminal law well unless you learn constitutional law and procedural law and the law of evidence, which comes from law school,” she explains, “so I’m much better equipped to teach the law classes.”

WRITER OF NOTE

“One of the things that I did while working on my J.D.,” offers Pollock, “was to write briefs for attorneys because it’s very similar to what we do in social sciences. We have a body of literature and try to organize it and make it clear to the reader. That’s exactly what a legal brief is. And I enjoyed that type of writing.”

She scared the living
daylights out of me.
She threw things out that
I’d never heard before.
And I thought, ‘I’m in
way over my head.’

‘Our major interest is in having a program that prepares folks who want to go into teaching and also benefits the state of Texas through criminal justice research that can make the system better.’

Pollock seems to enjoy all types of writing. She’s written 16 books. Several have gone into multiple editions, including her book on ethics, currently in its seventh edition. She’s even co-authored a work of fiction, *Morality Stories*, which holds a special place in her heart. “That book is used to tell stories” that get people to consider ethical dilemmas, she explains.

Says Quint Thurman, chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, “Dr. Pollock is one of the most productive scholars on campus and just recently was recognized by Will Oliver from Sam Houston State as the one of the top five most active criminal justice authors in the United States.”

Her love of writing spills over into the classroom as well, as she not only teaches students from books she’s written herself, but she also teaches them to write for themselves. “I believe in high standards,” says

Pollock. “My major goal is for students to learn how to think and how to write, and if you can do those two things, you’ll be a lot more successful in whatever you choose to do — even if you don’t go into the criminal justice field.”

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PH.D. PROGRAM

But Pollock works hard to see that those who do work in the criminal justice field and those who want to research it and effect change are well prepared to do so.

She and her colleagues developed the university’s newest doctoral program, in criminal justice, which enrolled students for its first class in fall 2009. “Our major interest is in having a program that prepares folks who want to go into teaching and also benefits the state of Texas through criminal justice research that can make the system better,” she says. “Most programs are residential. Our thought always was that there are plenty of people already working in criminal justice or other fields who can’t give up their day jobs, but still want to pursue a Ph.D. program.

“And that’s going to be the strength of our program, because you have a lot of synergy that takes place when you have people around the table who have long careers in law enforcement and can bring those perspectives to the discussion along with full-time students who don’t have that experience.

“In the long run,” says the professor, who in 2006 won the Bruce Smith Sr. Award from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences for her outstanding academic and professional contributions to criminal justice, “it’s going to make this program at Texas State one of the best in the country.” ★

To see more of Texas State’s rising stars, go to <http://www.txstate.edu/rising-stars>.

BOOKS BY JOYCELYN POLLOCK

Criminal Law (9th edition). Cincinnati, Ohio: Lexis/Nexis, Anderson Press, 2009

Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice (6th edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2008

Criminal Law (8th edition), with J. Klotter. Cincinnati, Ohio: Lexis/Nexis, Anderson Press, 2007

Morality Stories: Dilemmas in Ethics, Crime and Justice (2nd edition), with M. Braswell and S. Braswell. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2007

Case Studies in Criminal Justice Ethics, with M. Braswell and L. Miller. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2006

Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice (Name change, but 5th edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2006

Morality Stories: Dilemmas in Ethics, Crime and Justice, with M. Braswell and S. Braswell. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2004

Prisons and Prison Life: Costs and Consequences. Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2004

Ethics in Crime and Justice: Dilemmas and Decisions (4th edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2004

Women, Prison and Crime (2nd edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2001

Criminal Women. Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson Publishing Company, 1999

Ethics in Crime and Justice: Dilemmas and Decisions (3rd edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998

Counseling Women in Prison. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publishing Company, 1998

Ethics in Crime and Justice: Dilemmas and Decisions (2nd edition). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1994

Women, Prison and Crime. Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1990

Ethics in Crime and Justice: Dilemmas and Decisions (2nd edition). Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1989