Emmy-Award Winning Journalist for ABC News is a Social Science Spartan

Since graduating from MSU (Political Science `74) Emmy award-winning journalist, photographer and author Jay Schadler has been on an uncharted journey across America and the planet. He “took the road less travelled” and then kept going.

Schadler trained the writing and research skills he honed at MSU and Syracuse University into a lifelong passion for storytelling. Schadler has spent 29 years with ABC News, reporting for Primetime, 20/20, Good Morning America, and Nightline. He also has reported and anchored major specials for the National Geographic Channel and Discovery. In 2004 he returned to the Titan to cover Bob Ballard’s historic mission with the legendary ship.

Jay has reported from every corner of the world, travelling to India to track Bengal tigers and pursue poachers on the ONIB China main route, to Gabon to cover Ebola outbreaks, and to Afghanistan to report on environmental destruction of the Aral Sea. He and his camera have captured ancient tombs being opened at the Great Pyramids in Egypt and investigated the tragic death of two deep cave divers in South Africa. Anywhere the way he has won two national Emmy awards.

Although Schadler has interviewed celebrities such as Carl Sagan and Willie Nelson, his signature as a journalist has been to profile regular people on the road. The stories most memorable to him came from his groundbreaking ABC News series, “Looking for America.” He hitchhiked 13,000 miles across the country and interviewed the people who picked him up—often riding back home with them to continue the storytelling. When OJ Simpson was trying to appear to him, he hitchhiked through his hometown of St. Joseph, Michigan to Chicago and was joined by some of the most remarkable strangers, ever, the next day, had lost his hand to a hitchhiker. Jay’s stories from the road including a dozen series called “TailLights,” are credited with bringing among the earliest examples of what would become reality TV.

Between the road, his camera and his stories, Schadler has become a bearer of a Renaissance man. In addition to his journalism career, he is an accomplished photographer and graphic artist with a studio and gallery in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. When not travelling, you will find him in New England where he lives with his wife Jorden. He also still has many relatives and friends back in Michigan. He is hoping to get back to MSU this year to share a few of his astonishing stories with the students and for a showcase of his art. Read more about Jay Schadler at www.jayschadler.com.

First Research Trip Across Western Amazon Yields Surprising Results

As estimated 17 percent of the Brazilian rainforest has been destroyed, much of it in the newly developed eastern Amazon basin. Due to a government crackdown on illegal logging, loggers suspected of being involved with illegal operations went deep into the Amazon—but he needed to confirm it.

In late June, he made the 10-day trip along the western Transamazon Highway, by truck. That section of the highway is open and undeveloped—a wide strip of jungle that Walker had assumed was becoming the new logging frontier.

The researchers did find illegal logging operations, including smallholders and small trucks logging out sawn wood. Many experts believe too much deforestation could trigger a catastrophic change— or tipping point—that could cause the Amazon from tropical forest to dry savannah. “The western Transamazon Highway has become the battlefront for that tipping point,” Walker said.

But the biggest surprise of the trip was witnessing multiple examples of the government’s conservation efforts working. Driving through the Amazon National Park, he encountered diverse, plush populations—reflecting the climate changes that protect areas in the Amazon are spade back on paper.

The research supports a recent scientific study led by Walker that caused Brazil’s conservation efforts are extensive enough to ultimately protect the Amazon. This study, funded by NASA, was based on three years of atmospheric computer models.

Walker “doesn’t want to give a hand on the private sector and say the pathway to a better future is the absence of regulation. We want to see how this can happen with the British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The answer lies somewhere in the middle—there is sustainable growth that permits both the environment and the livelihoods and culture of Brazil’s citizens.”

“Seems we’re entering a new era in Brazil to fulfill the intentions of protected areas,” Walker said. “There are still many environmental concerns, and we certainly can’t say the battle’s won so we can all go home and put ourselves on the back. But one thing they’re doing is making a people a complete decision to protect the Amazon.”

Sociology Professor on National Climate Change Panel

Tom Dietz, Sociology Professor and former director of MSU’s Environmental Sciences and Policy Program, recently completed work on a national panel that concluded what many have assumed. Climate change is very real, is caused by human activities, and that action must be taken now to reduce this global threat.

Dietz served as vice-chairman of the National Research Council’s Panel which assigns weights to a broad range of scientific research, ecology and environmental concern and that concluded what many have assumed. Climate change is very real, is caused by human activities, and that action must be taken now to reduce this global threat.

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Message from the Dean

Greetings! Students returned to classes last month, and the campus is now once again alive with the energy of 45,000+ determined learners. More than 7,000 of these individuals are students of the social, behavioral and economic sciences.

Although we face ongoing economic challenges, I am pleased that our MSU community persists in its commitment to outstanding research and teaching. Scholars in the College continue to ask bold questions on issues relating to the environment and global climate change, security and democracy, health and human development, and global diversity and social inequality.

Recently several highly regarded political scientists earned their doctorates at MSU in 2010, and I am pleased that President John Engler is a member of MSU’s faculty, even though he is a practicing Christian. Routledge’s findings suggest that people are most likely to accept false claims, both consciously and unconsciously, when others refuse to confront the ways in which lies flourish, rather than challenge them, whether because of race, social class or other ideological differences.

Sociology scholars are asking big questions about how human development to what makes cities vital and economically competitive. Assistant professor Zhenmei Zhang recently published a paper with implications for many poor, developing countries. Her recent paper is entitled “The spinning message: How unconscious, when subtle clues remind them of ways in which Barack Obama is different from them, whether because of race, social class or other ideological differences.”

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