

4-3-2017

Dan Miller: 1948-2017

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Picca, Leslie H., "Dan Miller: 1948-2017" (2017). *College of Arts and Sciences Newsroom*. 71.
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Monday April 3, 2017

Dan Miller, professor emeritus of sociology, died March 30, 2017. He was 69.

A native of Iowa, Dan earned bachelor's and master's degrees as well as a Ph.D., in sociology at the University of Iowa. After teaching briefly at the University of Manitoba, Dan joined UD in 1978. He earned tenure in 1982, was promoted to associate professor in 1983, and was promoted to professor in 2000. He served as chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work from 1998-2002. He retired from UD in 2014 to play golf and spend time with his family, and continued to teach a class every fall at UD.

In his 39 years at UD, Dan was an influential scholar in the sociological field of symbolic interactionism. His article, "The Elements and Structure of Openings" (1975) was foundational in what came to be called the New Iowa School of Symbolic Interactionism.

He served as the president of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction (2004-05) and continued to serve on the executive board past his retirement. Dan authored many articles including, "'Snakes in the Greens' and Rumor in the Inner City" and "Cockroach Culture." He was also lead editor of the volume *Constructing Complexity: Social Interaction and Social Forms* (1997). For his influence in the field of micro-social theory, Dan earned the College's faculty award for outstanding scholarship in 2006.

Although he was a giant in the field of symbolic interactionism, he was never one to take himself too seriously. He wrote all his documents in Comic Sans font, and was known for leaving cartoons and "the Onion" articles around the department. Deeply critical of "the man", Dan was known for being a force at UD who was quick to stand up for the little guy.

Department chair Leslie Picca noted, “Dan was a scholar in every sense of the word. Conversations with Dan included a magical mix of wit, wisdom and esoteric references of popular culture. Students would flock to his classes as he didn’t just teach sociology — he taught students how to live.”

Dan is survived by his wife of 47 years, Barb; children Nathan (Maya) and Lena (Tim); grandchildren Romy, Jonathan, Timothy and Oliver; and many relatives. A memorial service for Dan will take place 2:30 p.m. Monday, April 10, in Sears Recital Hall, followed by a reception at Coco's Bistro.

- Leslie H. Picca, chair, department of sociology, anthropology and social work