

DEPARTMENT OF

SOCIOLOGY



Sociological
Outlook

From the Head's Desk

Welcome to the 2021 issue of The Department of Sociology newsletter, *Sociological Outlook*. It has been over a year since I assumed the headship duties in the department. A lot of things have happened in the past year, and so far, we have managed well. COVID-19 did slow down a few things, including our plan for the publication of this newsletter. The pandemic notwithstanding, we have shepherded our programs well, offering the entire range of courses as before, with no confirmed cases among the faculty or the graduate students.

Luckily, we were able to grow the department by completing three hires before the start of pandemic. Two of the hires were at the junior level and the third was at the senior rank. Two assistant professors joined our

department in August 2020. Dr. Isak Ladegaard (PhD Boston College) does research in criminology and technology and came to us via Monash University in Australia. Dr. Matthew Soener (PhD Ohio State University), with research interests in economic sociology, inequality, and climate change, joined us in the same month from Sciences Po in France.



Tim Liao

Last but not least, Dr. Reuben May (PhD University of Chicago), an award-winning teacher and an urban ethnographer who does research on race and sports, moved to UIUC from Texas A&M. Later in the newsletter you will find their bios. I am proud to present them to you and am immensely grateful that they have joined our ranks.

We are also pleased to report that our graduate and undergraduate programs are healthy in terms of the number of students. Our undergraduate program has 245 sociology majors this spring, up from 223 a year ago, and our Criminology, Law & Society minors program has 241 minors, up from 195 the same time last year. Last fall, nine first-year graduates joined our graduate program, bringing the total of our graduate students' body to 42.

Finally, I am very proud to announce that the department has launched our Outstanding Alumni Awards. The three recipients of the inaugural 2020 awards are Dr. Douglas Barnes (PhD, '79), Eboo Patel (BA, '96), and Glenna Spitze (PhD, '79). Congratulations! You will find their bios elsewhere in this newsletter. Please help us with this alumni award by making nominations in the future.

As always, we would love to hear from you about your recent achievements and milestones. In the meantime, have a great year in 2021!

Tim Liao

Outstanding Alumni Awards

Every year our Sociology at Illinois alumni make us proud through all the work they are doing in their communities and the world. The Outstanding Alumni Awards are given to those whose work we want to highlight and specifically celebrate this year. In 2020, those alumni were Douglas Barnes, Eboo Patel, and Glenna Spitze. At our virtual award ceremony in December, the alumni were introduced by current and former undergraduate and graduate students, exemplifying our commitment to connection. Senior Erica Hamlink, who introduced Eboo Patel with senior Seetha Ramaswamy, reflected that this experience was a brand-new challenge to culminate their years of involvement with the Department of Sociology as ambassadors. Congratulations to this year's recipients!

Eboo Patel (BA, '96)

Introduced by Seetha Ramaswamy and Erica Hamlink (seniors)



Eboo Patel is a distinguished alumnus from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, having received a bachelor's in sociology in 1996. He then received his doctorate in the sociology of religion from Oxford University through the Rhodes scholarship. With his identity as a Muslim American and becoming interested in religious diversity in college, Dr. Patel has been

inspired to work towards interfaith cooperation. In 2002, he founded the organization Interfaith Youth Core, which is based on the idea "that religion should be a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division."

Dr. Patel has been working with governments, non-profit organizations, college campuses, and other groups to promote dialogue and cooperation between different faiths and communities. One main focus of Interfaith Youth Core is helping find common ground while respecting differences. They launched the Interfaith Leadership Institute, which trains college students and staff in interfaith literacy and leadership skills. This brings together young people from different religious backgrounds to focus on service in the community and pressing issues on college campuses.

These students from different backgrounds working together creates a space where it is easier for people with different beliefs to cooperate. The skills and mindset students gain by participating allows them to be well equipped to focus not just on interfaith work but also issues surrounding the political divide in the U.S. and racism. This summer they had over 500 people attend the Interfaith Leadership Institute. The Interfaith Youth Core also has online resources that may be helpful for faculty members as well, such as information on teaching interfaith studies online and a guide to hosting interfaith friendly events. Finally, they also launched the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey, which is the most expansive survey of its kind addressing engagement with religious and worldview diversity for U.S. college students.

In addition to founding Interfaith Youth Core, Dr. Patel has many other accomplishments. A few highlights are: In 2009, he was named by the U.S. News & World Report as one of America's Best Leaders; in 2011, he served on President Obama's Inaugural Faith Council; in 2010, he received the University of Illinois Outstanding Asian-American Alumni Award; he has authored four books; he has blogged for newspapers such as The Washington Post and the Huffington Post; and he has spoken at a TED conference, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the Nobel Peace Prize Forum.

Doug Barnes (PhD, '79)

Introduced by Brian O'Neill (PhD candidate)



Dr. Douglas Barnes graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a PhD in sociology in 1979. However, rather than taking the more orthodox route

towards a career in academia, he became involved in work that today we call the sociology of development, as well as applied sociology working for the World Bank and Resources for the Future. In this regard, Dr. Barnes was an early exemplar of a practitioner in the fields of transnational sociology and the sociology of development, which our department specializes in today.

As Dr. Barnes career began to take shape he made a name for himself in what was at the time a rather neglected area – energy and infrastructure, two topics that perhaps too many of us take for granted, but are so essential to the fabric of society. A prolific author, he has published a number of notable books on these issues, such as “The Challenge of Rural Electrification: Strategies for Developing Countries in 2007,” “Cleaner Hearths, Better

Homes: New Stoves for India and the Developing World in 2012,” and now in its second edition, “Electric Power for Rural Growth: How Electricity Affects Life in Developing Countries.” As I was preparing to make these short remarks, and reflecting on the work of Dr. Barnes, I was struck by this output and how distinctive it was – how it marries so ably and so well a dual purpose that shows the enduring value of what preeminent sociologist C. Wright Mills called the sociological imagination – that ability to understand the social structural principles underlying seemingly individualized personal troubles. For while Dr. Barnes has always been concerned about infrastructure, energy and the environment, underlying his concerns for these very material realities of life, is social structure and the social inequality that goes with it, and viewing this through an applied lens. Where the typical sociologist, might diagnose the problem of the unequal access to electricity in rural Guatemala for example, Dr. Barnes has tried also to solve, or at least show a possible path forward for those problems. In this way, we can see that his work has not only been a scientific project, but a deeply public and global one. This past year, Dr. Barnes has very generously pledged to support graduate research in our department. Thank you Dr. Barnes for your gift and for setting a fine example of scholarship in action.



Outstanding Alumni Awards *continued*

Glenna Spitze (BA, '71; MA, '75; PhD, '79)

Introduced by Loren Henderson (PhD, '14)



It is my honor to introduce to you

Dr. Glenna Spitze.

Dr. Glenna Spitze received her bachelors and two graduate degrees in sociology from the University of Illinois between 1967 and 1979. While a student she sang in

two ensembles directed by Neely Bruce, the American Music Group and the Contemporary Music Group. During her tenure in these ensembles, she sang in the premieres of Gertude Stein and Virgil Thomson's "Four Saints in Three Acts" and George Bristow's "Rip Van Winkle." She received her PhD in sociology from the University of Illinois in 1979. Dr. Spitze went on to have an illustrious career. She

is currently a Distinguished Service Professor Emerita of Sociology at the State University of New York at Albany where she specialized in women in the workplace environments, gender dynamics in family life, household labor, and family dynamics in aging children and siblings. She is the co-author of "Sex Stratification: Children, Housework, and Jobs" and "Family Ties: Enduring Relations between Parents and Their Grown Children" More than 60 peer review articles and reports. In addition, to years of distinguished scholarship and service to her university, she has also served as a professor on numerous editorial boards such as the Journal of Marriage and the Family, Gender and Society, and ASR. She has also served as a consultant on funded research projects looking at Parent Adult Child Relations. Congratulations again to Dr. Glenna Spitze for receiving this award.



Faculty Grants

Our amazing faculty

Our faculty members continue to excel in the field and be recognized for their achievements. Multiple faculty members received grants and awards for their recent work. Here, we'd like to put the spotlight on two of our esteemed faculty: Kevin Leicht and Cynthia Buckley.

Cynthia Buckley

In 2019, professor Cynthia Buckley and two other investigators were awarded a grant by the Department of Defense for their project, “The Central Eurasian State Capacity Initiative: Assessing Threats to Geopolitical Stability and Conflict along Russia’s Periphery.” This year, Buckley was awarded funding for multiple projects which similarly focus on European socio-political developments. One, “National Values and Political Reforms in Post-Maidan Ukraine (VALREF)”, addresses the fundamental changes in the framework for state- and nation-building in Eastern Europe after 2013/2014.” (University of Oslo) Additionally, this year the Campus Research Board of the University of Illinois funded Buckley’s project “PACE: Perspectives and Attitudes on COVID in Eurasia.” This funding covers a “second round of data collection on views of state responses to COVID 19 in Ukraine, Estonia, and Georgia” and includes collaboration with multiple graduate students. Professor Buckley’s commitment to cutting-edge research and student engagement in research is a continually wonderful facet of our department.



Kevin Leicht



Professor Kevin Leicht was also recognized by multiple institutions this year and awarded grants for multiple research projects. In April, the National Science Foundation (NSF) announced that funding for projects related to the novel coronavirus would be considered through their Rapid Response Research funding mechanism. Leicht’s project, “Tracking and Network Analysis of the Spread of Misinformation Regarding COVID-19,” examines the ways that misinformation regarding COVID-19 disseminates through social media and news outlets, according to NSF. This project demonstrates the diverse applications for and the importance of social science research. Leicht is also involved in a project entitled, “The War on Expertise: The Global Spread of Online Myths about Medicine and Health,” funded by the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), which the center states is “a hub of transdisciplinary research and digital scholarship where University of Illinois faculty, staff, and students, and collaborators from around the globe, unite to address research grand challenges for the benefit of science and society.” This project was conceived before the pandemic, and is only more relevant now. Professor Leicht’s continued collaboration with educators and researchers across campus highlights for all what we as sociologists know is true: A sociological perspective is useful anywhere.

New Faculty

Reuben May



Professor Reuben A. Buford May, PhD is the Florian Znaniecki Professorial Scholar and professor of sociology at the University of Illinois—Urbana Champaign. Prior to his appointment at UIUC, May served as the *Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence*, *Glasscock University Professor in Undergraduate Teaching Excellence*, *Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award '18* winner, and professor of sociology at Texas A & M University. He is the author of three books including the award-winning book “Living Through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream (2008).” He has been a fellow at the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University and a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visiting professor at MIT. May received his PhD in sociology from the University

of Chicago, and his research focuses on race and culture, urban ethnography, the sociology of sport, and the sociology of the everyday. May’s current research focuses on racial discrimination in public accommodations, particularly in urban nightclubs. In addition to his books and other scholarly publications, May has been featured on radio and television and in print media, in particular for his performance as the #rappingprofessor Reginald S. Stuckey. He has performed at venues like Kyle Field, the Chicago House of Blues, Hard Rock Café in Seattle, as well as others in major cities.

Matthew Soener

Professor Matthew Soener (feel free to call him Matt)’s bio begins in Omaha, Nebraska, so the Midwest (and its winters) is no stranger to him. He followed his older sister to the University of Kansas for a bachelor’s degree. After that, he headed to Ohio State for grad school. At OSU, he channeled the interest he picked up in college on the 2008 financial crisis into sociology. His master’s degree and dissertation were on the “financialization” of the economy. During graduate school, the unexpected assignment to teach environmental sociology turned fortuitous. He became hooked, especially on the topic of climate change. Since then, he’s begun research on the topic and plans to continue while at UIUC. After taking his exams in grad school, he needed a distraction. He started teaching himself French and reading French history. When he saw an ad for a postdoc in Paris, he jumped at the opportunity and was accepted. He’s had more good memories there than he can count. One that stands out in particular was getting married last month! Neither Sara (his partner) nor he thought they would get married, but COVID, it turns out, has a way of showing what really matters in life. Sara, who is French but spent the first part of her life in the UK, is a project manager for an art fair. The fair is, for better or for worse, still going to happen this year. After this, she’ll be able to come with Matt to UIUC, where they look forward to meeting everyone soon!





Isak Ladegaard

Professor Isak Ladegaard is our final new faculty member. His interests are in economic sociology, technology and social change, crime, and deviance. In most of his work, he uses a mixture of computational and qualitative research methods. Ladegaard's research has appeared in *Social Forces*, *British Journal of Criminology*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Sociological Review*, and several other peer-reviewed journals. He has also been interviewed by multiple media outlets, including *Wired Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Le Monde*, and *The New York Times*. His current research project on digital drug trade is funded by the National Science Foundation. Ladegaard obtained his PhD and master's degree in sociology at Boston College, and a bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Hong Kong. He was born in Oslo, Norway.



Announcing the Douglas Barnes Graduate Student Scholarship

We want to recognize one of our 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients, Doug Barnes, for the generous gift he made to the Department of Sociology. Barnes' endowment will support graduate research in the unit. Recipients shall be students whose research relates to development issues, with preference given to development in underdeveloped countries—to which Barnes has dedicated his career.

Douglas Barnes was visiting a remote village in southern India in the 1990s when he ducked into a small thatched-roof house and found a woman sitting on the earthen floor and lighting a wood fire on a traditional stove made of clay. Smoke filled the entire two-room house, and Barnes suddenly noticed that he was getting quite woozy. Smoke rises, so he quickly crouched down before he keeled over right then and there. "I also noticed a sleeping baby immersed in smoke, for one of the traditions in south India is to have swinging children's beds suspended from the ceiling," Barnes says, "When I finally got outside, I took a deep breath."

This incident drove home just how potent a house filled with smoke can be, particularly for women and children who spend so much time by the fire in developing countries. The push for cleaner-burning cookstoves is the latest drive for Barnes, a College of LAS alumnus who devoted his career to solving energy problems in poorer parts of the world. His leadership at the World Bank in rural electrification, renewable energy, and clean cookstoves has earned him a 2012 LAS Alumni Achievement Award.

Barnes grew up in the coal-mining region of western Pennsylvania in one of the poorest counties in the United States. After receiving his bachelor's in sociology from Ohio University, he entered the Peace Corps in 1969 and traveled to remote areas of India. There, he received his first taste of international work, conducting surveys of irrigation pumps for agriculture. Barnes was drawn to the University of Illinois because of its strong South Asian studies program, and he received his PhD in sociology in 1979. He then moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked for Resources for the Future, a think tank that put him on an unexpected track for a sociologist—studying the impact of rural electrification in developing countries. One of the controversies at the time was whether you should invest in rural electrification in developing countries because of the high cost of the infrastructure. Barnes visited many villages with and without electrification, and he says the benefits were clear. His research backed up this observation.

"We established a close relationship between electricity and school attendance," he said. "Children are able to study in the evening because of electric lighting, so they are better prepared for school." His studies also revealed that electricity increased socializing in the evenings, improved irrigation systems, and increased the productivity of women, who could now produce handicrafts in the dark evening hours and then sell them. In some cases, this added a dollar per day to their income. "This may not sound like much," he said, "but when the poverty line is a dollar per day in many countries, it makes a big difference. It can take you above the poverty line."

Since 1983, Barnes has done much of his rural energy work for the World Bank, but he has also been a consultant for various U.S. and United Nations agencies. While the first phase of his work aimed to get rural homes on the electrical grid, the second phase targeted remote areas where connecting homes to the grid was not possible. He worked on a program in Bangladesh to install household electricity systems based on free-standing solar panels—one of the most successful World Bank renewable energy programs at the time. Today, there are over a million solar home systems in Bangladesh. Although the two electrification programs were extremely successful, Barnes initially had a hard time generating interest at the World Bank in the third phase of his work—clean cookstoves. It wasn't until concerns about climate change arose that interest began to take off. But, as he explains, concerns about primitive cookstoves go beyond climate change.

According to Barnes, 2.5 billion people in the world cook and heat their homes with biomass fuels, and about 2 million deaths occur every year due to smoke exposure. Smoke causes a range of health problems, such as child pneumonia, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and heart disease, as well as low birth weight in children born to mothers who breathed smoke from open fires during pregnancy. Barnes retired from the World Bank in 2008, but he remains heavily involved as co-chair of the monitoring and evaluation efforts in the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. He is also a lead energy consultant for the World Bank and an advisor for a large nationwide survey in India administered by the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research, India. Looking back on all of this work, he recalls a focus group in the Philippines in which he asked people if they would be willing to give up electricity for a long period if they were paid a certain amount of money. In other words: How much is it worth? He expected the older people to think, “I lived without electricity before and I can do it again if it means being paid \$20,000.” But most people who had experienced life without electricity said no amount of money would be worth losing it. They had seen the benefits of electricity, and as Barnes said, “The benefits were not gradual. It was a sea change.”

If you're feeling inspired by Doug's gift and would like to make a donation or learn more about how you can support the department, turn to the back cover of this newsletter!

Graduates and student awards

We would like to recognize the excellence displayed by our students this past year, especially those who received departmental awards.

Undergraduate awards

Student Engagement: Alexis Hernandez

Outstanding Senior Award: Anna Hoban and Claudia Sova

Sociology Senior Highest GPA Award: Claudia Sova

Best Undergraduate Student Paper Award: Alexis Pantoja-Gonzalez

Graduate awards

Beslow Graduate Paper Award: Po-Chia Tseng

Znaniecki Publication Prize: Amirhossein Teimourigerdeh



Department updates

As you can see, in the face of all that 2020 threw at us, the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois persevered and grew. We are dedicated to our students and working to build a more inclusive and comprehensive program. We are determined to continue on this path, and your donations help make that goal possible. If you are able, please consider making a gift to our department. Here are just a few of the programs and developments your contributions support:

Our 2020/21 Seminar Series

Every Friday of the fall semester, the Department of Sociology hosted a seminar related to the topic of social justice and police brutality. Speakers from across the country were interspersed with presentations from our own faculty members and graduate students, and the events were open to all. Students in both classes of our ambassador program were encouraged to attend, and many documented their attendance and reaction in class reflections. With the exception of the day of the graduate student conference, the series is continuing every Friday this spring. We are looking forward to the addition of three international presenters to the schedule: one from Israel, one from France, and a third from Australia. We would love to see you there! Please reach out to our office (email: sociology@illinois.edu) for information on the schedule and how to virtually attend one of these important events.

The new and improved Sociology Student Ambassador Program

Beginning in January 2020, the Department of Sociology officially relaunched the Student Ambassador Program! The program has two parts and serves multiple purposes. First, interested

sociology majors take SOC199: Leadership and Engagement Through Sociology. This course teaches the students the ins and outs of our program while also giving students professional development services such as workshops on how to conduct an internship search. The goal of this course is to give students the tools to build their narrative and describe the benefits of studying sociology at Illinois. Students leave the course with the ability to convey how impactful our program has been for them, and the impact they can in turn make for a potential employer or graduate school program.

Advising office expansion

The Department of Sociology is on a mission to expand the amount and scope of the programs and services available to its students. In 2020, this included the creation and subsequent expansion of an internship program within the Sociology Advising Office. From three students working on various outreach projects, the program now includes four discrete positions: two undergraduate teaching interns who assist in facilitating the Sociology Ambassadors Program; a social media intern; and a senior media and communications intern. We brought on our head advisor Dawn McNulty in a full-time capacity, and hired an assistant to the advisor. Together, the advising office team is working on creating and implementing a coordinated marketing strategy with the goal of bringing more students into the sociology department. We know how great our program is, and we want to show that to as many people as we can.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Invest in the Future



Joseph Baldwin
Associate Director
of Development

When you give to the department, you make an impact on the future of our students and faculty. We are grateful to so many of you who continue to generously invest in us and ensure our excellence in teaching, learning, research, and outreach. If you are interested in giving opportunities, please contact our associate director of development, Joseph Baldwin, who can be reached at jbbaldw2@illinois.edu or (217) 300-5967. Gifts can be made outright or through options such as a gift from your will/estate, appreciated stock, and home/farmland donations.

There are many ways to give and direct your donations to Sociology at Illinois. If you are interested in establishing a focused endowment, like Doug Barnes, or want more information about donating, please contact Joseph Baldwin.

Our website, sociology.illinois.edu, is a great place to see updates on everything going on at the department. Please also feel free to reach out to our office via email at: sociology@illinois.edu.

Gifts can easily be made online at sociology.illinois.edu/giving

Or, if you would prefer send your donation by mail, please send it to:

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