

Sociology Graduate Program Newsletter: Fall 2017



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Chair's Column: Dr. Furjen Deng

Dear Graduate Students,

As all of you know, this has been a difficult start to the semester for many students and faculty at Sam Houston State University. Hurricane Harvey has caused significant loss and damage through large parts of Texas. Graduate students in the Masters Program in Sociology have been personally affected. The Sociology Department faculty and staff's hearts go out to everyone who has been affected. The Sociology Department will work with those affected to ensure their continued success in their academic pursuits.

I would like to congratulate the following students who successfully earned a Master of Arts in Sociology this past spring and summer: Mary Ahlstrom, Tim Arthur, William Brown, Kaitlin Grant, and Grace Nicholl.

We are proud to say that we have the largest incoming class of new students in the recent history of the Sociology MA program. There are a total of 42 students currently enrolled in program, and this includes 17 new students. Dr. Jason Konefal, the Director of the Sociology Graduate Program, and other graduate faculty members will guide and work with all of you throughout the school year. In addition, as we did in the past, the Department will continue to encourage and provide resources to support student travel to professional meetings for presentations and student publications.



During the 2016-2017 academic cycle, the Department provided more than \$10,000 in travel support for 37 graduate and undergraduate students to attend professional meetings. All of them completed oral or poster presentations at these professional meetings. We believe that students' involvement in professional development activities is important for students to connect what they are learning in the classroom to the professional community. Please let me or your professor know if you are interested in enhancing your professional experience within the discipline.

The Department also welcomes several new faculty members. Dr. Jeffrey Gardner is a new assistant professor. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. He will teach and conduct research in race-related subject areas. Dr. Gardner's addition to the faculty will diversify our course offerings to our students. Dr. Brooklynn Wynveen is a new lecturer in the department. She has a Ph.D. from Clemson University and a M.S. from Texas A&M. At the graduate level, Dr. Wynveen will be teaching SOCI: 5312 Seminar in Sociological Research. Earlier this year, we also hired Dr. Melissa Tackett-Gibson to serve as Director of the Sociology Internship Program. Dr. Tackett-Gibson is working to set up and manage the Sociology Internship Program, with the goal of providing opportunities for our students to connect with potential employers before they complete their degree. If you are interested in obtaining some internship experience, please contact her at mat012@shsu.edu.

Currently, we are actively searching for candidates to fulfill two more tenure-track positions at the rank of assistant professor. Both new hires, if successful, will join the department in Fall 2018 and are expected to teach and conduct research in class, inequality, and community areas. These hires will further expand our course offerings and research opportunities for students.

In summary, thank you for choosing to be a part of the Department of Sociology at Sam Houston State University. Wishing you all a great year ahead and please don't hesitate to contact me or any of the faculty if you have any questions.

Sincerely Yours,

Furjen Deng, Ph. D.

Spring 2017
Commencement
with Sociology
MA graduates
Mary Ahlstrom
and Tim Arthur



Graduate Director's Column: Dr. Konefal



I would like to begin by offering my condolences and support to those students and their families who have suffered losses as a result of Hurricane Harvey. While Harvey has disrupted our program, this is nothing compared to the disruption it has caused in tens of thousands of people's lives. As all of you return to your studies, please keep those who are suffering as a result of Harvey in your thoughts. This includes students in the MA Program. For many people in coastal regions of Texas, it will be a long and arduous recovery.

Now for some better news: this semester we have **17 new students** starting their graduate studies in the Sociology Program. I would like to welcome to the Masters Program the following students: Kim Karlberg, Ansonia Jones, Megan Bennett, Jori Malone, Cole Long, Jenna Wood, Arturo Medrano, Leonardo Castaneda, Sean Chesterfield, Timothy Peacock, Shauna Thomas, Lucilla Vasquez, Samantha Weisinger, Christina Wood, Chez Singleton, Corinne Rudison, and Ingrid Moore. Please extend a warm welcome to them.

As some of you know, the Sociology MA Program underwent its scheduled external review during the 2016-2017 academic year. Overall, the results of the review were very good. The reviewers noted: "The department provides a strong graduate curriculum. The department is characterized by collaboration, innovation, and incorporating new approaches for evaluating and enhancing teaching at the graduate level. The graduate faculty are incredibly adaptable. The faculty seem pro-student: They support graduate student travel to conferences (even renting a van to take students to conferences in Texas). They mentor graduate students."

The reviewers also made some recommendations on ways to strengthen the MA Program in Sociology. We have combined their suggestions with data from our internal evaluation of the program, and will be making a series of improvements to the MA program over the course of the next year. Immediate changes that will impact many of you include changes to the comprehensive exam process, the methodology curriculum, and the efforts to foster greater community among graduate students. I will be providing more information on these changes in the near future!

As graduate director, I would also like encourage all of you to consider taking advantage of university support to attend professional conferences, and the many scholarships offered by Sam Houston. These are great opportunities!

Lastly, please make sure to look at the "Important Dates" section at the end of the newsletter for information on university and conference deadlines.

I look forward to continuing to work with everyone this semester.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Jeffrey Gardner



My research centers on understanding how indigenous nations who are divided by state borders seek collective rights that transcend those borders. Researchers and individuals in the public sphere often tie societies, cultures, and nations to specific states, without acknowledging the conflicting boundaries between some nations and states. This is especially problematic for the many indigenous nations who are fragmented by state borders (e.g., the Mapuche nation across the Chile-Argentina border, the Tohono O'odham nation across the Mexico-United States border, and the Mam across the Guatemala-Mexico border). Such indigenous peoples are actively confronting histories of dispossession and racism while seeking recognition as nations with ancestral territories that span state borders. In particular, my research addresses how Mam leaders, Mam organizations, and Mam individuals in their everyday lives are actively constructing nationhood across the Guatemala-Mexico border. Broadly, this research aims to make important contributions to understanding how cross-border nations are actually constructed and how contemporary state borders are implicated in that process.

I situate my research at the intersection of sociological work on race and ethnicity, social movements, and political sociology. Additionally, this work bridges together the interdisciplinary areas of research about indigenous peoples and border studies.

I am also truly passionate about teaching. I have especially enjoyed teaching courses about racial and ethnic inequality, which I am excited to be teaching at Sam Houston State University this fall semester. I look forward to helping students develop a further understanding of sociological ideas and problems.



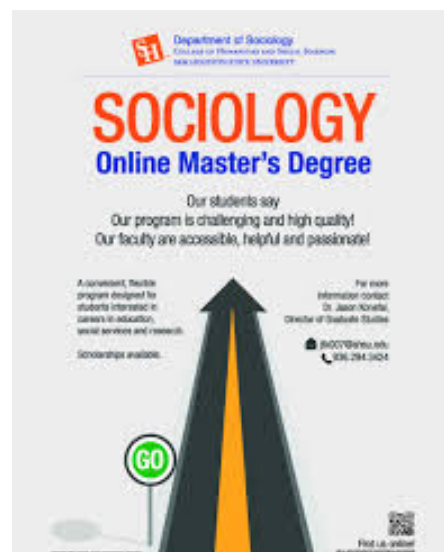
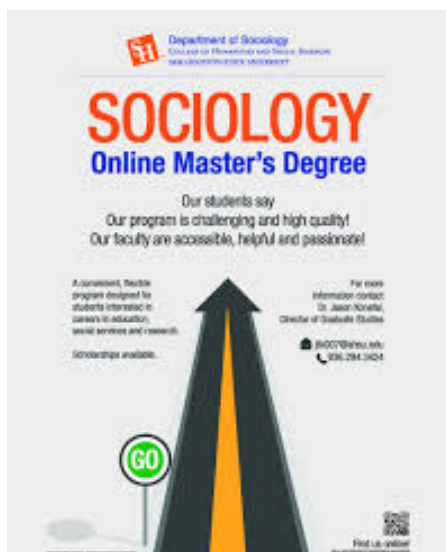
Faculty, Staff and Dean Zink at the kicking off the Fall 2017 Semester

Alumni Spotlight: Darion McKinley (Fall 2015)

My journey toward sociology began long before joining the Sam Houston State family, but it was influenced by the university from the start. I took Introduction to Sociology, which was taught by Professor Daniel Argo, during my second semester at Lone Star College. Professor Argo was a great professor and, unbeknownst to me at the time, a graduate from the Sociology department at SHSU. I eventually completed an associate's degree and finished my undergraduate coursework at the University of Houston. My plan had always been to attend graduate school, and Sam Houston was one of my top choices.

I was initially accepted to the psychology graduate program, and I completed my first year in that department before transitioning to sociology. I had taken a Medical Sociology course in my first year as an elective, which reminded me of the passion I had for the discipline during my undergraduate studies. The transition was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life. I had the privilege of working with the graduate advisor and department chair as a graduate assistant in my first semester. The experience was invaluable. I learned a lot about working in a professional environment and the daily responsibilities of an academic. The courses in the department were rigorous and fascinating and topped only by the fact that I was working with such an esteemed faculty. The graduate environment is intimate and I was able to benefit from individualized attention from my professors, which made all of the difference. Dr. Cabaniss provided me with the opportunity to guest lecture in one of her undergraduate courses, which was an incredible experience. In addition, Dr. Fortunato and Dr. Douglas have been valuable sources of support during and after the program. Finally, Dr. Bonanno has had an indescribable impact on me and has been a beacon of wisdom and guidance.

I began applying to PhD sociology programs after teaching at the community college level for a year and leaned on the support that the Sociology department has always provided me. I received great advice along with several excellent letters of recommendation from department faculty. I experienced a lot of adversity during my graduate career and highlighted those difficulties as I wrote my personal statement for admissions committees as well. I was accepted by Temple University in Philadelphia and offered a fellowship funding package. I am incredibly grateful to the Sociology department and to my Bearkat family for helping to put me in this position.



Faculty-Student Research Highlight

Dr. Stykes and Ken Arsenault

Ken Arsenault has been working with Dr. Stykes on a research project that is examining the relationship between fatherhood, domestic labor, parenting, and gender roles. This past year they presented a paper together at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America in Chicago entitled "Challenging Dichotomies of Fatherhood in an Era of Family Complexity: With an Application Examining Father Involvement." The paper is currently under review at the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Below is a description of the exciting research they are working on provided by Ken.

Demographic trends in the United States indicate there is more childbearing outside of marriage, more multipartner fertility, and more blended families than ever before. Additionally, nonresident fatherhood is on the rise, especially among men that are nonwhite, young, and less educated. Yet, research has tended to view fatherhood status through the narrow lens of two dichotomies: residency status (resident/nonresident) and biological status (biological/stepfather). The downfall of this approach is that many fathers do not fall into these neat categories, such as the father who has nonresident *and* resident children.

In our research, we developed a new way to operationalize fatherhood such that fathers with either simple or complex fathering roles are included in analyses. Our measure of fatherhood status is not limited to ties to a single focal child, and in this way measures a father's role complexity independent of perspective. In our study we provided estimates of fathers that fell into each fathering role, and then used regression analyses to see how each fathering role influenced a father's involvement with his children. We hypothesized that complexity in fathering roles was more common among men that were nonwhite, less educated, young, and unmarried. We also expected that there would be lower levels of involvement among fathers with complex parenting roles.

We used the National Survey of Family Growth for our analyses because it had higher estimates of nonresident fathers compared with several other surveys. We documented the prevalence of each fathering role, and used regression analyses to determine the relationship between fathering role and father involvement. We found that 1 in 5 fathers did not fall into the previously-mentioned dichotomies—rather, many fathers had complex parenting roles. Overall, we found support for most of our hypotheses; however, complex fathering roles were more common among older men than younger men—mostly likely because these older men had more opportunity to enter all fathering roles they will experience. In terms of father involvement, there was only an association between fathering role and financial support—there was no association between fathering role and visitation of nonresident children. Nonwhite fathers are more likely to use social welfare programs such as TANF and Medicaid, and are the fathers that were more likely to have complex fathering roles. Accordingly, this suggests that policy makers should take into account complex fathering roles in their decision making process. We leave open the possibility for future research to explore in depth how fathering roles influence other measures of father involvement, and we highlight that there are other fathering roles that should be included in analyses, particularly in cases where fathers have partial or shared custody of children.

Important Dates

File for Graduation: September 15. If you intend to graduate this semester, you must file for graduation: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/registrar/graduation/apply-to-graduate/application-for-degree.html>

Comprehensive Exam: November 6-20. If you are taking your comprehensives this semester, you should contact me by September 12.

Schedule Changes and Dropping Classes

Last Day to Drop with a "Q" Grade: November 10

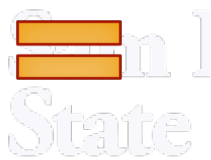
Spring and Scheduling

Advising will begin October 30

* Advising slots will be scheduled using SignUpGenius.com

Graduation

Commencement: December 8-9



Sociology for the People

Preliminary Spring 2018 Schedule

SOCI 5314: 01 Social Statistics	Dr. Deng
SOCI 5314: 02 Social Statistics	Dr. Deng
SOCI 5325: Seminar in Food and Society	Dr. Hatanaka
SOCI 5331: Sociology of the Family	Dr. Kirk
SOCI 5335: Seminar in Social Inequality	Dr. Douglas
SOCI 5376:01 Applied Research Methods	Dr. Stykes
SOCI 5376:01 Applied Research Methods	TBD

Conferences

American Sociological Association Annual Meeting: August 11-14, Philadelphia. Abstracts due January 11, 2018.

International Sociological Association: July 15-21, Toronto. Abstracts due September 30.

Southern Sociological Association Annual Meeting: April 4-7, New Orleans. Call for papers will be announced in September.

Midwest Sociological Association Annual Meeting: March 23-25, Minneapolis; Abstracts due October 31, 2017.

Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting: Portland, Oregon, July 26-29. Abstract date TBA.

Population Association of America Annual Meeting: April 26-28, Denver. Abstracts due September 29.

* Note these are some of the conferences that sociology faculty members go to. There are additional sociology conferences that may be in your region.