

Sociology Graduate Program

Newsletter: Fall 2018



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Chair's Column: Dr. Jason Konefal

Dear Graduate Students,

I would like to welcome all of our returning students back from summer break and the new students to the program. As most of you know by now, the Sociology Department is undergoing some changes in leadership. I have switched roles from the Director of Graduate Studies to the Chair of the Department, and Dr. Stykes is the new Director of Graduate Studies.

It has been an honor to serve as the Director of Graduate Studies from 2015-2018. I have had the privilege to see the program grow, many students graduate, and our graduates get into doctoral programs and launch successful careers. In recent years, the Sociology Department undertook many initiatives to strengthen the program, including reinstating the thesis option (the only online Sociology MA to offer a thesis!), revising the comprehensive exam process, and improving the curriculum. These changes have helped to make the Sociology Master's Program at Sam Houston a leading graduate program.

I have full confidence that Dr. Stykes will be an excellent Director of Graduate Studies. He has been involved with the program for several years through teaching classes and grading comprehensive exams. Under his leadership, I believe the program will take another step forward and our students will continue to excel in their graduate studies.

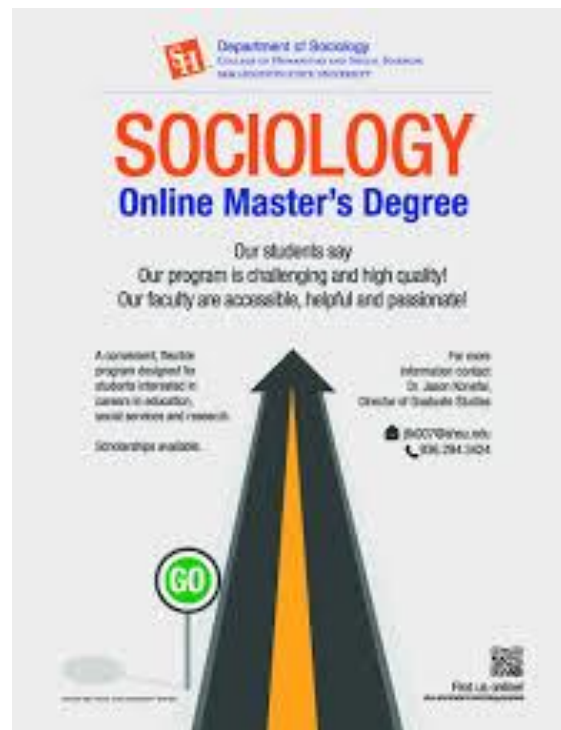


It is my pleasure to introduce our new faculty member: Dr. Mary Scherer. Dr. Scherer comes to us from UMass-Amherst. Her research examines the nexus of inequality and education. In her dissertation, she examined the ways that the socioeconomic positions of students affected their university experiences. Dr. Scherer will be teaching classes on social inequality for us. To learn more about Dr. Scherer, please read her faculty spotlight below.

As Chair, I am committed to a program of shared governance for the Sociology Department. For all of you, this means I want to hear from you. I want to know what we are doing well, as well as the things that we could do better. Thus, please feel free to reach out to me, as well as Dr. Stykes, at any point during your studies and after you graduate. Feedback from students and alumni is critical to building a successful academic program.

I would like to highlight that Sociology Department and SHSU have substantial resources for graduate students. We can support travel to conferences to present your research. This is a great experience and a way to gain professional development and meet some of your faculty face-to-face. Over the course of this year, there will also be numerous scholarship opportunities. I strongly encourage all of you to apply.

I would like to wish everyone a wonderful academic year and success in their studies.



The poster features a central graphic of a large black arrow pointing upwards, with a yellow path leading to its tip. To the left of the arrow is a green circular sign with the word "GO" in white. The text is arranged around these elements. At the top left is the SHSU logo and the text "Department of Sociology, College of Education and Social Sciences, SHSU UNIVERSITY". The main title "SOCIOLOGY Online Master's Degree" is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, a quote from students reads: "Our students say: Our program is challenging and high quality! Our faculty are accessible, helpful and passionate!". To the left of the arrow, it states: "A convenient, flexible program designed for students interested in careers in education, social services and research. Scholarships available." To the right, it provides contact information: "For more information contact: Dr. Jason Kovale, Director of Graduate Studies, jk007@shsu.edu, 254.294.3424". At the bottom right, there is a QR code and the text "Find us online: www.shsu.edu/graduate".

Graduate Director's Column: Dr. Bart Stykes



Hi folks! I hope that each of you enjoyed your summer breaks and your fall semesters are up and running smoothly. I am pleased to report that this fall we are adding **13** students to our program. Please join me in welcoming the following students: Christopher Alanis, Jeramy Cannon, Tiffany Curry, Scott Doty, Raekwon Halton, Katherine Hensley, Seth Johnson, Kelie Jones, Alexis Kyle, Reginald Oatman, Sarah Rios, Evan Spurlock, and Ashton Tassin to our program!

We also said goodbye to a number of graduate students at the Spring and Summer 2018 commencement ceremonies. **Congratulations** to our most recent batch of graduates: Kenneth Arsenault, Candace Metcalfe, and Eric Rausch!

It is an exciting time to be a graduate student in Sociology at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Konefal will be teaching our first section of SOCI 5100: Proseminar in Sociology. This one credit our course: (1) introduces our incoming cohorts to our faculty, (2) articulates expectations for mastery in course content, and (3) provides practical tips for how to succeed in graduate school.

Separately, I am facilitating a shared Blackboard page where all active graduate students remain enrolled during their time in our program. Please be sure to check it out! This learning community is primarily designed to establish a collective identity among our graduate student body. I am excited about the potential that this learning community has to bolster engagement in a 100% online program and **strongly** encourage each of you to take full advantage of the features of this page.

In terms of original student research, our students are doing a lot! Former graduate students: (1) Kenneth Arsenault completed his [master's thesis](#) in the Spring 2018, (2) Tim Arthur's [master's thesis](#) was revised and submitted with Dr. Emily Cabaniss for journal publication, (3) and Kenneth Arsenault's research (stemming from his graduate assistantship) was recently revised and resubmitted for journal publication. Among current students, four are enrolled in our SOCI 6099 (thesis) course this fall. Last year our department had two students present their original research at professional conferences.

Please take some time to review the "Important Dates" at the end of the newsletter. I look forward to working with each of you over the course of this semester!



Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Furjen Deng

“The theory of servant leadership is vital, but it’s the active Serving Leader that makes the critical difference.”

-Ken Jennings

Dr. Furjen Deng has just finished her three-year term as Chair of the Department of Sociology. During her time as chair, the department has continued to grow and thrive. Under her leadership, four tenure-track assistant professors and five lecturers joined the ranks of our department’s faculty.

In striving to better serve our students, Dr. Deng also initiated an internship program to provide both undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to obtain hands-on experience and become more competitive job applicants. She has also initiated an alumni outreach effort. This includes a survey of our alumni, the beginnings of an alumni network, and an annual spring reception for students, faculty, and alumni.

Dr. Deng’s intentional efforts to be transparent and honest in her dealings with colleagues and students alike, coupled with her effective leadership style has contributed to a collegial, friendly department with a highly productive faculty. Dr. Deng has been particularly effective in her efforts to ensure the growing junior faculty have the tools and resources to become active contributors to the Sociology Department here at Sam. Thank you for your service, Dr. Deng!

Dr. Deng will now return to being a full-time faculty member. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Dr. Deng is engaged in research and outreach on health and medical issues in the Chinese community in Houston.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Mary Scherer

It is with much enthusiasm that I introduce you to our incoming tenure-track faculty, Dr. Mary Scherer. Dr. Scherer joins us from UMass-Amherst, where she successfully completed her dissertation in Spring 2018. Dr. Scherer identifies as a social class and inequality scholar. Her dissertation demonstrates that academic experiences in college serve as a means to either reproduce or challenge class inequalities – depending on the institution and context.

One of Dr. Scherer's findings in her dissertation was that regional, state universities (much like Sam Houston State University) excel in narrowing the gaps between middle-class and working-class students whereas larger flagship state institutions often reinforced and reproduced class-based inequalities through the achievement gap. Accordingly, Dr. Scherer has voiced on multiple occasions that she is eager to be a part of a university that has an established history of serving less-privileged students and contributing to the democratization of higher education.

Dr. Scherer has received special recognition for both her teaching and research. In 2015 she received the SAGE Teaching Innovations and Professional Development Award through the American Sociological Association. The Community Research and Development Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems also awarded her the "Outstanding Graduate Student Paper" for a manuscript entitled "Gentrification, Creative-class Style: Theorizing the State in Cultural Space- and Placemaking." Dr. Scherer's recent scholarship can be accessed at [Race, Gender & Class](#). In addition, she has contributed to teaching excellence in sociology by publishing one of her high-impact, active learning assignments on [TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology](#).

On applying to SHSU, Dr. Scherer emphasized her excitement about the opportunity to work with graduate students. In the coming semesters, you can expect to see her teach courses such as Social Inequality and the Sociology of Education.



Important Dates

Apply for Graduation: September 7. If you intend to graduate this semester, you must apply for graduation ([click here](#)).

Comprehensive Exam: November 1-15. If you are taking your comprehensive exams this semester, you should contact the director of graduate studies by September 4.

Schedule Changes and Dropping Classes

Last Day to Drop with a "Q" Grade: November 9

Spring and Scheduling

Advising will begin October 29

- Advising slots will be scheduled using SignUpGenius.com

Registration Opens for Spring: November 5

Graduation

Commencement: December 7-8

For thesis deadlines, please consult the [Academic Calendar](#).



Sociology for the People

Preliminary Spring 2019 Schedule

Courses in the Core

SOCI 5314 (two sections): Social Statistics *with Dr. Deng*

SOCI 5376 (two sections): Applied Research Methods *with Dr. Choi*

Electives

SOCI 5338 (one section): Sociology of Disaster *with Dr. Miller*

SOCI 5354 (one section): Seminar in Social Equality *with Dr. Douglas*

SOCI 5386 (one section): Sociology of Aging *with Dr. Hsu*

SOCI 6360 (one section): Economy and Society *with Dr. Bonanno*