

Sociology Graduate Program Newsletter: Spring 2017



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Chair's Column: Dr. Furjen Deng

Dear Graduate Students,

Whether you are a new or returning student, I hope all of you have had a great start to the spring semester. During the past fall semester, we said goodbye to the following students who successfully earned a Master of Arts in Sociology: Elisse Basmajian, HAITRIEU NGUYEN, Brittany Ramos, and Tacy Thorton. Congratulations!

The Sociology Department is committed to ensuring our students have the necessary support and recourse to successfully complete the requirements for the M.A. program in Sociology. In addition to the existing travel and other different types of scholarship support for students' professional development, we will begin to provide a \$1,000 scholarship award for each of new incoming students beginning in the fall 2017. The award is made possible through a recruitment grant awarded by SHSU Online.

During the current academic year, the M.A. in Sociology at SHSU is under a comprehensive review. In accordance with the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (TAC Rule §5.52), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requires all master's and doctoral programs to be reviewed every 7 years. Part of the review process includes the department conducting a self-study to assess the quality and effectiveness of the program. Led by the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Konefal, that self-study was conducted and completed in December, 2016.



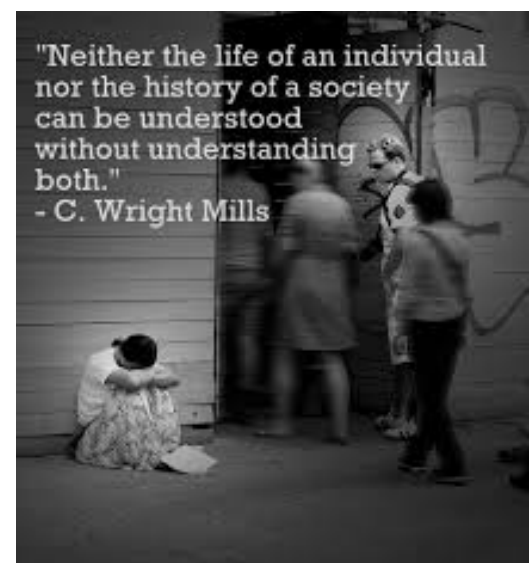
Two external reviewers independently selected from peer institutions will visit the campus in April to identify the program strengths and needs. Upon the results of the review, the department will develop action plans to address the weaknesses and needs identified to ensure the continued quality of our program and services. We believe that this process will lead to further improvements in the M.A. program going forward.

In the fall 2016, we also successfully completed the search for two positions. The first position is a new tenure-track faculty position at the rank of Assistant Professor. Mr. Jeffrey Gardner, currently finishing his dissertation at the University of Georgia, will join the department for Fall 2017. He will teach and conduct research on race and other selected areas. His addition to our faculty will further diversify our course offering and research opportunities for our students. The second position is the Clinical Professor/Director position of the Internship Program. Dr. Melissa Tackett-Gibson was hired in January 2017 to serve as the Director of The Sociology Internship Program. Dr. Tackett-Gibson has extensive experience working with nonprofit and community development organizations and has more than ten years of teaching experience at SHSU. Her major responsibility is to set up and manage the Sociology Internship Program, with the goal to provide an opportunity for our students to connect with potential employers before they complete their degree. She will also develop programs to connect the department with our alumni. We are excited to have these two extremely talented people join us.

While the recent changes in the national political landscape creates lots of uncertainty at the local level, our mission and commitment to excellence in providing a student-centered graduate program remains unchanged. Thank you for choosing to be a part of the Department of Sociology at Sam Houston State University. I wish all of you to have a great year ahead and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely Yours,

Furjen Deng, Ph. D.
Professor and Chair



Graduate Director's Column: Dr. Konefal



Welcome back! I hope that everyone's semester is off to a good start.

As Director of Graduate Studies, I would like to emphasize that I am committed to a graduate program that is inclusive of all students. Questions of fairness, equality, and justice are at the heart of sociology. The sociology faculty at SHSU are committed to interrogating the structures and practices that are generating inequality, polarization, and exclusion in today's world at all levels from the global to the local, and proposing alternatives that are more just, equal, and inclusive. The sociology faculty at SHSU are equally committed to examining these pressing social issues in the classroom, and pushing their students to think critically about the world that they are part. Among other things, this includes building a program that reflects the diversity of today's world, and fostering a learning environment and community that are supportive of all peoples. I look forward to working with our M.A. students, faculty, and staff to continue to build a program that fulfills these commitments.

This semester we have **four new students** starting their graduate studies in the Sociology Program. I would like to welcome to the Masters Program: Tanya Benjamin-Wilson, Lesley Cano, Sarah Pitts, and Charlie Stinnett. We also have one student returning to the program after a getting a degree in education: Eunjin Hwang. Please extend a warm welcome to them.

Currently, the department has **eight students** working on theses. There is a range of exciting projects including research looking at community development, social media, LGBTQ issues, education, and food deserts, among other issues. This is some really exciting research!

Lastly, I would like to remind everyone that several scholarship opportunities are coming up. Please apply! The dates are below in the "Important Dates" section.

I look forward to continuing to work with everyone and build a truly exceptional online

Statement from American Sociological Association:

"As sociologists, we oppose this Executive Order because it affects our colleagues and students as well as the conditions for knowledge production. In addition, sociologists have documented and analyzed the ways in which symbolic boundaries are made more rigid and result in the social exclusion of specific groups. This Executive Order targeting specific groups of individuals has effects not only on its immediate victims, but also on how our society understands itself and its orientation toward diversity and human rights, consensus on climate change and other policy issues." The Full Letter on the ASA's position, signed by 180 professional scientific, engineering, and educational associations and universities can be found at: [https://mcprod.aas.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Multisociety Letter on Immigration 1-31-2017.pdf](https://mcprod.aas.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Multisociety+Letter+on+Immigration+1-31-2017.pdf)

Student Spotlight: Ken Arsenault

I never intended to be a sociologist. My professional background was in computers, with my love of science fiction inspiring my initial interest in that field. The late renowned science fiction author Isaac Asimov is one of my favorites. He wrote a long series of novels about a fictional science called psychohistory—a mixture of mathematics, history, and social science that could be used to predict the future of large groups. By using psychohistory to predict the trajectory of society, government leaders could make informed policy decisions to lead society towards a most prosperous path.

I chose sociology as an undergraduate major because it appeared to closely mirror the goals and methods of psychohistory. I now know that we are a long ways away from using sociology to predict the outcome of society, and may never achieve that goal. Despite this, my interest in sociology strengthened throughout my undergraduate career, so much so that I wanted to continue studying sociology further at the graduate level.

When my wife was set to return to work after maternity leave with our first child, I realized that I could both use benefits I earned serving in the Air Force to finish my undergraduate degree I started years earlier, and—at the same time—stay home to care for our child. Becoming a stay-at-home father led to my interest in family, fatherhood, and gender, which, in turn, led to my interest in my current thesis topic.

For my thesis, I am studying the gendered division of household labor. Despite great strides in reducing inequalities for women, many still consider housework to be “women’s work”; even more, women continue to bear the burden of childcare. Men who, like myself, stay home to care for children break from gender norms, yet in most other cases these men retain (or hold on to) all other aspects of a masculine gender identity. The existing research says that these men cross the metaphysical gender “border” when they care for their children. For my research, I am trying to determine how a man’s varying amount of employment outside the home impacts his gendered division of household labor. For instance, I am asking: Do fathers that work only part-time have a more egalitarian division of household labor? My thesis is guided by the greater question: what are the daily conditions in the household that influence a man’s gender “border crossings.” I am guided by a quantitative orientation, and am using daily time-use diaries provide by the nationally representative sample of households in the American Time Use Survey to answer these questions.

My career in the Air Force had me forecasting weather. Weather is a frequent subject of small talk, and I have found that I can no longer discuss weather without wondering if I should tell people how it actually works. Similarly, I have found that sociology has further ruined small talk for me. Despite this, I plan to continue studying sociology further after completing this master’s program. My goal is to enter a sociology PhD program to continue my studies in family, parenting, and gender. Ultimately I hope to research society for a living, but I also want to teach sociology to help students better understand the world they live in.

Important Dates

Comprehensive Exam: March 20-April 2. If you are taking your comprehensives this semester, you should have contacted me. If you have not, please do so ASAP.

Schedule Changes and Dropping Classes

Last Day to Drop with a "Q" Grade: April 7

Scholarship Dates

Sociology: February 21

CHSS: February 22

Graduate Studies: Summer May 1; Fall August 1

Summer and Fall Scheduling

Advising will begin March 6

Registration Opens: March 27

* Advising slots will be scheduled using [SignUpGenius.com](https://signupgenius.com)

Graduation

Commencement: May 12-13



Sociology for the People

Summer 2017 Schedule

SOCI 5337: Gender and Society

Dr. Cabaniss

SOCI 5338: Sociology of Disaster

Dr. Miller

*SOCI 5338 will be taught over both summer sessions. It is still a 3 credit hour course and cost the same as other summer 3 credit courses.

Preliminary Fall 2017 Schedule

SOCI 5310: Seminar in Sociological Theory

Dr. Bonanno

SOCI 5312: Seminar in Sociological Research

Dr. Fortunato

SOCI 5314: Social Statistics

Dr. Deng

SOCI 5378: Techniques of Research Proposal
Writing in the Social Sciences

Dr. Theodori

SOCI 5321: Cultural Sociology

Dr. Leipnik

SOCI 5322: Seminar in Medical Sociology

Dr. Choi

SOCI 5333: Sociology of Religion

Dr. Kirk