

Anthropology

The MIT Anthropology program is dedicated to research in cultural anthropology, to undergraduate teaching that introduces students to the fundamentals of cross-cultural understanding and social thought, and to graduate teaching in the history and anthropology of science and technology. Our undergraduate subjects cover a wide range of social action, with special strengths in the study of the contemporary world and the social context of technology. Through research and teaching collaborations, the Anthropology faculty maintains strong ties with programs in the School of Engineering and the Sloan School of Management and with other programs in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS), including Women's and Gender Studies, Latin American Studies, Comparative Media Studies (CMS), History, and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society (STS).

As cultural anthropologists, department faculty members work across the globe exploring the diversity of human beliefs and practices. We believe the three criteria for excellent anthropology are detailed descriptions of the places, activities, and relationships of the persons and groups being studied, achieved through fieldwork and ethnography; insightful, valid interpretation of what the described behaviors, events, and objects mean or signify to the actors observed; and theoretical explanation that can be placed within a larger body of anthropological literature. The Anthropology faculty seeks to contribute to MIT's excellence by producing ethnographies that draw upon a rich pool of detailed descriptions to provide windows on the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of particular human groups and communities while drawing inferences about the significance of this site for more general scholarly problems concerning power, justice, ethics, technology, science, environmental sustainability, violence, and identity.

Personnel and Administrative Changes

Professor Susan Silbey continued to serve as head of the Anthropology program. Professor Silbey took a sabbatical leave during the spring semester, and during her absence Professor James Howe served as acting head. Lecturer Heather Paxson, who joined our faculty as an assistant professor on July 1, 2007, was successfully reviewed for promotion to associate professor without tenure beginning July 1, 2008. On the same date, Manduhai Buyandelger joins the Anthropology faculty as an assistant professor. Graham Jones has accepted the department's offer of an assistant professorship, to begin on July 1, 2010, after completing postdoctoral research as a fellow at Princeton University. Associate professor Stefan Helmreich became director of graduate studies for MIT's Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (HASTS). Associate professor Christine Walley took a sabbatical leave during the fall semester. Rosemary Hegg continued as administrative officer, and Amberly Steward was promoted to senior administrative assistant in February 2008.

Program Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology program faculty members served on various committees, boards, and task forces at MIT, including the MIT Energy Initiative Education Task Force, the Committee

on Curricula (COC), the Women's and Gender Studies Steering Committee, the HASTS Steering Committee, the Kelly-Douglas Prize Committee, the MIT France Committee, the Minority Faculty Caucus, and the MIT Ethnicities Initiative. Professor Silbey served as chair of the SHASS Education Committee, and assistant professor Erica James served as a faculty associate for the Center for the Study of Diversity in Science, Technology, and Medicine. Professor Walley served as organizer of and faculty advisor to a two-day conference conceived by graduate students in the MIT HASTS program titled "Disruptive Environments: Academics, Activists and Journalists in Conversation."

Outside MIT, Professor Jean Jackson served on the advisory boards of the *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* and *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*; she served on the editorial board of *Boletín de Antropología*. She was also an at-large board member of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America (SALSA) and a member of the American Anthropological Association's Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities. Professors Jackson and Howe both served on the program council and board of directors of Cultural Survival. Professor Howe is also a trustee of the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, MA. Professor James is an advisory board member of the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Dorchester. She is an article referee for *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*; *Anthropological Quarterly*; and *Medical Anthropology*. Professor Silbey served as editor of the Cambridge Studies in Law and Society book series, on the editorial boards of *Regulation and Governance* and the *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, and as Theory Prize Committee chair, Sociological Theory, for the American Sociological Association. She was a panel organizer for the "Bringing into Dialogue Divergent Perspectives about Culture" session of the American Sociological Association's Section on sociology and culture. Professor Helmreich became a member of the editorial board of *Cultural Anthropology* and a member of the advisory panel for *Science as Culture*.

Educational Activities

Five new undergraduate subjects were introduced this year: 21A.255 Food and Culture, 21A.233/SP.410J Masculinity in Popular Culture, 21A.355/STS.060J Anthropology of Biology, 21A.360/STS.060J Anthropology of Sound, and 21A.660 (to become 21A.330/SP.467J) Reproductive Politics and Technologies. In addition, Professor Howe, together with faculty from Music and Theatre Arts, introduced a new interdisciplinary class, 21A.113/21M.013J The Supernatural in Music, Literature and Culture.

As department head and acting head, respectively, Professor Silbey and Professor Howe served on the HASTS steering committee. Professor Silbey was also transfer credit examiner for Sociology. Professor Helmreich became director of graduate studies for HASTS. Professor Howe serves as transfer credit advisor for Religious Studies as well as Anthropology while also advising anthropology majors. Professor Paxson was the Anthropology advisor for both minors and concentrators.

Professor Silbey supervises eight doctoral students in HASTS, four in the Sloan School, two in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), one in the Engineering Systems Division, and one at Boston University. In addition, two Sloan and two HASTS

students supervised by Professor Silbey graduated with the class of 2008. Professor Silbey is also a field research supervisor for two DUSP master's students and two students at Harvard University, and she served as external examiner for a PhD student in sociology at Columbia University. Professor Helmreich is doctoral advisor for three HASTS graduate students and is on the PhD or exam committee for five others. He also serves on the PhD committees of two students from Harvard University and one student from the University of Iceland. Professor Michael Fischer chaired the dissertation committees of two graduate students, was on the committee of three more, and also supervised two predissertation students. Professor Howe was on the dissertation committee of a student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and participated in her thesis defense.

Presentations

Professor Howe delivered an invited paper titled "La etnografía y la política: las acciones de los mediadores kunas entre 1925 y 1955" at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The paper was part of the "Mestizajes: a propósito de indentidades ambivalentes" seminar series.

Professor Jackson presented "Images of Amazonian Women in Colombian National Newspapers" at the SALSA sessions in Oxford, England.

Professor Silbey presented "Regulation and Resistance: Desire for and Fear of Transparency in the Design of Compliance Database" (with Tanu Agrawal) at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association in Berlin; "Trust and Surveillance in the Cultures of Science" at the annual meeting of the College Safety Health and Environmental Management Association in Boston; "Governing Green Laboratories: Trust and Surveillance in the Cultures of Science" at the STS Colloquium (MIT) and the École Normale Supérieure (Cachan, France); "How to Observe and Analyze Popular Legal Consciousness" at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen School of Law and the École Normale Supérieure (Cachan); "The Sociological Citizen: Observing Relational Interdependence in Law and Organizations" (with Ruthanne Huising and Salo Coslovsky) at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association in Montreal, Canada, and the Second Biennial Conference of the Standing Group on Regulation and Governance, University of Utrecht; and "Ethnographic Studies of Law and Science" at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, France.

Professor Fischer was a featured speaker at the Stony Brook University Humanity Center's 20th Anniversary Conference and participated in three national conferences.

Professor Walley presented "Deindustrializing Chicago: A Daughter's Story" at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association and "From the Pristine to the Polluted: Exploring the Changing Politics of Nature Protected Areas" at Duke University.

Professor Helmreich presented several talks: "What Is Life?" a guest lecture in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences (12.007 Geobiology); "Acoustemologies," a guest lecture in the Department of Architecture (4.431

Architectural Acoustics); “Chiefly about Decomposition,” the closing comments at a Harvard University conference; “Earth at Sea,” a discussant commentary at Brown University; “Life Forms at Three Extremes” at Duke University; “How the Ocean Got Its Genome: Bodies of Knowledge and Bodies of Water in Marine Microbiology” at Harvard University; and “Alien Ocean: An Anthropology of the Deep Sea” at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Professor Helmreich also organized a panel, “Ways of Sensing Biology,” for the meetings of the Society for the Social Study of Science in Montreal.

Professor James gave talks on “Ruptures, Rights, and Repair: The Politics of Truth in Haiti” at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association; “Witchcraft, Bureaucraft, and the Social Life of (US)AID in Haiti” at Yale University; “The Politics of Truth, Justice, and Reparations in Democratic Haiti” at the MIT Minority Faculty Caucus; and “Charity, Security, and Haitian Health Disparities in Boston” at the Department of Social Medicine/National Institute of Mental Health Conference, Harvard University.

Professor Paxson presented two talks on her research into the American artisanal cheese renaissance, “Cultivating *Terroir*: How American Producers Locate Artisan Cheese along a Nature-Culture Continuum” at the University of Iceland and “The Art, Craft, and Science of Artisan Cheesemaking” on a panel at the meetings of the Society for the Social Study of Science in Montreal. She also gave talks on motherhood and family planning in Greece at Brown University and two invited talks in Mytilini, Greece, one as part of a workshop organized around her visit.

Publications

Professor Fischer completed a book, *Anthropological Futures*, and started a book series, Experimental Futures. The first book of the series, *Two Bits*, by former Fischer advisee and MIT graduate Chris Kelty, has already been published. Professor Fischer also published five articles.

Professor Howe published “Argument is Argument: An Essay on Conceptual Metaphor and Verbal Dispute” in the journal *Metaphor and Symbol*. The final version of his book *Chiefs, Scribes, and Ethnographers: A Native People’s Encounter with Writing and Anthropology* is being prepared for publication by the University of Texas Press.

Professor Jackson published “Rights to Indigenous Culture in Colombia” in *Transnationalism and the New Legal Order: Tracking Rights between the Global and the Local* (M. Goodale and S. Merry, eds.).

Professor Silbey published two edited collections: *Law and Science Volume I: Epistemological, Evidentiary, and Relational Engagements* and *Law and Science Volume II: Regulations of Property, Practices, and Products*. With Scott Barclay, she published “Understanding Regime Change: Public Opinion, Legitimacy, and Legal Consciousness” in the *Oxford Handbook of Law and Politics*.

Professor Walley has written a chapter, “Deindustrializing Chicago: A Daughter’s Story,” to be published in the forthcoming book *The Insecure American* (C. Besteman and H. Gusterson, eds.).

Professor Helmreich published two journal articles based on his anthropological research among marine biologists: “An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography” in *American Ethnologist* and “Blue-Green Capital, Biotechnological Circulation and an Oceanic Imaginary: A Critique of Biopolitical Economy” in *BioSocieties*. He also published two book chapters, “An Archaeology of Artificial Life, Underwater” in *Genesis Redux: Essays in the History and Philosophy of Artificial Life* (J. Riskin, ed.) and “The SX-70 Camera” in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (S. Turkle, ed.). In addition, Professor Helmreich published “Induction, Deduction, Abduction, and the Logics of Race and Kinship” (a commentary on Stephan Palmié’s “Genomics, Divination, ‘Racecraft’”) in *American Ethnologist* and “Life Is a Verb”: Inflections of Artificial Life in Cultural Context” in *Artificial Life*.

Professor James published the chapter “Haunting Ghosts: Madness, Gender, and Ensekirite in Haiti in the Democratic Era” in *Postcolonial Disorders* (M.-J. DelVecchio Good, S. Hyde, and B. Good, eds.).

Professor Paxson published “Post-Pasteurian Cultures: The Microbiopolitics of Raw-Milk Cheese in the United States” in *Cultural Anthropology*, which led to an invitation for a 25-minute radio interview on “Local Dirt,” a show broadcast by KDVS, the campus radio station at the University of California, Davis. Also, from her research in Greece, she published “A Fluid Mechanics of Erotas and Aghape: Family Planning and Maternal Consumption in Contemporary Greece” in *Love and Globalization: Transformations of Intimacy in the Contemporary World* (M.B. Padilla, J.S. Hirsch, M. Muñoz-Laboy, R.E. Sember, and R.G. Parker, eds.).

Grants, Honors, and Awards

Professor Silbey was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship (2008–2009) for “Trust and Surveillance in the Cultures of Science.” She was awarded a residency (2008–2009) at the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy. She will also become the Goldberg professor of humanities on July 1, 2008.

Professor Paxson won the Levitan Prize in the Humanities for her innovative research about the world of American artisanal cheese, as well as the Baker Memorial Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Professor Paxson has also been named the Class of 1957 career development chair, beginning July 1, 2008.

James Howe
Acting Head
Professor of Anthropology

Susan S. Silbey
Program Head
Professor of Sociology and Anthropology

More information on the Anthropology program can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/anthropology/>.