

Anthropology

Highlights of the Year

This has been an unusually active year for the [MIT Anthropology Program](#), setting a pattern of public engagement we hope to follow in the future. “Sensing the Unseen,” our yearlong Sawyer Seminar on the Comparative Study of Cultures series, funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, was organized by class of 1957 career development associate professor Heather Paxson and associate professor Stefan Helmreich. This seminar series was hugely successful, drawing overflow crowds of close to 100 each session from around the Institute and throughout the Boston area.

A presentation by professor David Harvey from the City University of New York on “The Enigma of Capital” (cosponsored by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning [DUSP]) drew overflow crowds of close to 200 people. A special colloquium with Professor Ronen Shamir of Tel-Aviv University on “Electrical/Power: Colonial Policies, Technological Innovation, and the Origins of Separatism in 1920s Palestine” was well attended. Professor Pablo Boczkowski of Northwestern University spoke on “Online News: Public Sphere or Echo Chamber?” cosponsored by the Comparative Media Studies Communications Forum. Other speakers hosted by Anthropology included Rachel Black of Boston University; Keith Bybee of Syracuse University; Marianne Constable of the University of California, Berkeley; Deborah Matzner of Wellesley College; Tanina Rostain of New York Law School; and Bambi Schieffelin of New York University.

This year Anthropology was also pleased to host several visitors. Dr. Reuben May was in residence during the fall semester as a Martin Luther King Visiting Professor. Dr. May taught a class on the cultures of sport and gave three public lectures at the Institute. Dr. Aude LeJeune, after completing a PhD in Sociology of Law from the University of Liège, Belgium, visited in the spring semester and carried out research on law, social movements, and legal consciousness. Dr. Emily Zeamer was hired after a nationwide search as a postdoctoral fellow associated with the Sawyer Seminar series. In addition to her participation in the seminar series, Dr. Zeamer worked on her manuscript about contemporary Thai Buddhism in a technological age.

Honors and distinctions accorded our faculty included awards to associate professor Erica James of a Class of 1947 career development chair as well as the Rita E. Hauser Fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. Professor Paxson was the winner of the Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching for 2011. She also received an honorable mention for the Sophie Coe Prize in Food History from the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery. Professor Helmreich received two awards: the American Ethnological Society Senior Book Prize and the Gregory Bateson Book Prize for *Alien Ocean*.

The Museo del Canal Interoceánico de Panama in Panama hosted an exhibit of professor James Howe’s photo-ethnography on the Kuna of Panama. There was a great turnout at the opening with many Kuna attending who appreciated the photographs. The exhibit is now being prepared for publication in book form.

Our video “Doing Anthropology” has proved to be of great interest both within and outside the MIT community. There have been about 100,000 hits on TechTV, making it the most popular video in the category of “Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences” on TechTV. Of the 10,000 public and private videos on TechTV it is the 22nd most popular. It is being used in Introductory Anthropology classes around the country.

Personnel and Administrative Changes

During academic year 2010–2011, Leon and Anne Goldberg professor Susan Silbey continued to serve as head of the Anthropology program. Assistant professor Graham Jones joined the faculty on July 1, 2010, after completing a three-year fellowship at the Princeton Society of Fellows. Two successful promotion cases were completed: tenure for professor Heather Paxson and promotion to full professor for Stefan Helmreich. Each will begin their new positions on July 1, 2011. During the spring semester assistant professor Manduhai Buyandelger took a Junior Faculty Research Leave.

Teaching and Curriculum

Professor Jones introduced two new classes to the undergraduate curriculum this year, 21A.275 Fun and Games: Cross-Cultural Perspectives and 21A.335/24.913/STS.070 Language and Technology.

Driven by concerns about the coherence and breadth of the curriculum, as well as changes in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) General Institute Requirements and the push towards global education, Anthropology has been engaged in a comprehensive review of the undergraduate curriculum with the help of funding from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Fund for Teaching and Learning. The project is not yet complete but our plan is to make Anthropology more responsive to student needs and interests. Based on findings in the initial phase of the project, several new classes have been developed for implementation next year, and there may be additional future changes to the structure and content of the curriculum.

Faculty participation in the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society (HASTS) as well as in PhD programs in the Sloan School of Management and DUSP was well in evidence with several faculty members serving as graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees.

Publications

Professor Helmreich’s article “Human Nature at Sea” was published in *Anthropology Now*. “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography” (with S. Eben Kirksey) appeared in *Cultural Anthropology* and “Life Forms: A Keywords Entry” (with S. Roosth) in *Representations*. Professor Helmreich also authored five other publications.

A reprint of “The Political Economy of ‘Trauma’ in Haiti in the Democratic Era of Insecurity” by Professor James appeared in *A Reader of Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities*, B.J. Good, M.J. Fischer, S.S. Willen, M-J DelVecchio Good, eds.

Professor Jones published “Modern Magic and the War on Miracles in French Colonial Culture” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.

Professor Paxson published “Cheese Cultures: Transforming American Tastes and Traditions” in *Gastronomica* and “Locating Value in Artisan Cheese: Reverse-Engineering Terroir for New World Landscapes” in *American Anthropologist*. In addition, her article “Placing the Taste of Vermont Cheese” appeared in *Cuizine: The Journal of Canadian Food Cultures*, an online editor-reviewed journal.

Professor Silbey published “Legal Culture and Cultures of Legality” in *Sociology of Culture: A Handbook*, J.R. Hall, L. Grindstaff, M-C. Lo, eds., and published by Routledge.

Presentations

Professor Buyandelger gave two talks at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, “Skimming the Cream off the Top: Why Women Do Not Always Rule the Elections” and “Exchanging Sheep for History: Shamanism and Remaking of the Past in Post-Socialist Mongolia.” She also presented “To Know the Place of Death: Shamanism and the Politics of Silence in Post-Socialist Neoliberal Mongolia” at a conference on Spiritual Politics and the Ethics of Democracy at Aarhus University, Denmark.

Professor Helmreich presented “Waves” at the Institute of Advanced Study, Durham University, United Kingdom, as well as “Alien Ocean: Life at Sea” at Durham University and the University of California, Santa Barbara. He gave a talk on “Nature/Culture/Seawater” at the University of California, Berkeley, and a plenary lecture on “Nature-cultures” at meetings of the Society for Cultural Anthropology in Santa Fé, New Mexico. He also gave a presentation at the University of Pennsylvania as well as a talk at panels at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) meetings he co-organized with S. Eben Kirksey of “Multispecies Salon 3: Swarm.”

Professor Howe gave an invited talk on “Kuna Scribes and the Political Uses of Literacy in Panama” at a symposium at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, University of Wisconsin, Madison. He was also an invited participant at a panel on “New Ethnographies of Textual Artifacts and Media” at AAA meetings.

Professor Jean Jackson was a panel member for “Whom (or What?) do Indigenous Organizations Represent?” at the meetings of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America in San Antonio, Texas, and for a film screening of *Secrets of the Tribe* and ethics caucus at the AAA meetings in New Orleans. She also gave a talk on “Indigenous Organizing over the Decades in South America” at the AAA meetings and on “The Challenges Posed by Reindigenization Projects to Liberal Conceptualizations of the Citizen, and Universal Human Rights” at a conference at Johns Hopkins University.

Professor James gave presentations on her research on Haiti and other topics at several venues, including the AAA meetings in New Orleans, Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, Harvard University, University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), University of Virginia, University of Connecticut, Boston College, George Washington University School of International Affairs, MIT Women’s and Gender Studies, the Center for International Studies, and the Media Lab.

Professor Jones spoke on “‘But Where Can the Magic be Hiding?’ Hypothetical Reported Speech in the Training of Entertainment Magicians” at Temple University and at UCLA, and on “Conjuring the Supernatural” at the Society for Cultural Anthropology’s biannual meeting in Santa Fé, New Mexico.

Professor Paxson gave a talk titled “The Microbiopolitics of Raw-Milk Cheese in the United States” at Harvard University and as part of a colloquium series at Durham University in the United Kingdom. She also presented on “An Animal Anthropology of Farmstead Cheese” at a panel at the meeting of the Society of Cultural Anthropology in Santa Fé, and on “Cultivating and Marketing the Liveliness of Artisan Cheese” at a panel at the AAA meetings in New Orleans.

Professor Silbey gave several talks including the keynote address, “What is the Socio in Socio-Legal Studies?” at the Socio-Legal Studies Association, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, London, United Kingdom. Other speaking venues included Sloan School of Management, the Harvard University Interdisciplinary Workshop where she was an invited speaker, Harvard Business School, the Eastern Sociological Society annual meeting in Boston, the Law and Society annual meeting in Chicago where she was also a panel organizer and chair, Syracuse University, the Academy of Management in Montreal, Canada, and the University of Venice, Italy.

Associate professor Christine Walley presented a paper with Mr. Chris Boebel: “Video as an STS Methodology: Notes from the Classroom” at the European Science, Society and Technology Conference in Trento, Italy. She also presented “Deindustrializing Chicago: A Daughter’s Story” at the How Class Works conference at the State University of New York at Stonybrook.

Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology program faculty members served on a wide range of committees and boards at MIT. Professor Helmreich served on the Committee on Curriculum and the Committee on Graduate Programs and as acting director of the Kelly-Douglas Prize Committee. Professor Howe was on the hiring committee for the MacMillan-Stuart chair. Professor James was a member of the HASS Overview Committee. Professor Paxson served on the HASTS Graduate Program Curriculum Committee and the Austin Kelly III Essay Prize Committee and as a Burchard Faculty Fellow and a graduate student mentor for the Graduate Women @ MIT program. Professor Silbey served on the Energy Minor Oversight Committee, the Energy and Environment Board, the MIT–Singapore University of Technology and Design exchange, the HASTS steering committee, and the Killian Prize Committee, as well as the faculty committees for the Institute for Work and Employment Research, Economic Sociology, and the Organization Studies Group at the Sloan School. Professor Walley served on the McMillan-Stewart Search Committee and was Faculty Chair of the Stata Parent Council at Technology Children’s Center.

Outside MIT, Professor Buyandelger is a consultant for the project “Oral History of 20th Century Mongolia” at Cambridge University, United Kingdom. Professor Helmreich served on the editorial boards of *Science as Culture* and *Cultural Anthropology* and is on the David M. Schneider Award committee for graduate student essay on kinship, cultur-

al theory, and American culture for the American Anthropological Association. Professor Howe has served since 2003 on the board of directors and the Program Council Committee of Cultural Survival. Professor Jackson has also served on the Cultural Survival board since 1997 and on the executive board since 2004. She is on the steering committee of the Network of Concerned Anthropologists. In addition, Professor Jackson is an at-large board member of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America and serves on the editorial boards of *Antipoda: Revista de Antropología y Arqueológica de la Universidad de los Andes*, *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, and *Boletín de Antropología*. Professor Jackson is also on the international advisory board of *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*. Professor James is an advisory board member of the Haitian Multi-Service Center of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Boston. Professor Jones was a consultant for British Telecom on research on the socio-cultural impact of telecommunication technologies. Professor Silbey is a mentor for the Sociology of Law Section of the American Sociological Association and the Law and Society Association. She is on the editorial boards of *Annual Review for Law and Social Science*, *American Political Science Review*, and *Regulations and Governance*, and is an editor for Cambridge University Press, *Studies in Law and Society*.

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