

Anthropology

Personnel and Administrative Changes

During academic year 2013–2014, Leon and Anne Goldberg Professor of Humanities, Sociology and Anthropology Susan Silbey continued to serve as head of the [Anthropology Program](#). A successful promotion case was conducted during spring 2013 for Associate Professor Erica James, who received tenure on July 1, 2013. Associate Professor Heather Paxson took on the role of director of graduate studies in the History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (HASTS) Doctoral Program. On June 30, 2014, Professor Silbey stepped down after eight years as department head. Stefan Helmreich, Elting E. Morison professor of anthropology, began serving as department head on July 1, 2014.

Highlights of the Year

Our faculty received a number of awards this year, several from MIT. Manduhai Buyandelger received the James A. and Ruth Levitan Prize for the Humanities for her ethnographic research on parliamentary elections in Mongolia. Professor Helmreich, together with Professor Caroline Jones in Architecture, received the Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Award for Excellence in Education to fund a new undergraduate class entitled 4.648J/21A.507J/4.649 Resonance: Sonic Experience, Science, and Art. Heather Paxson was named a 2014 MacVicar faculty fellow. Susan Silbey received the Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching.

We continued to gather MIT funds for ongoing research projects. Professors Manduhai Buyandelger, Graham Jones, and Susan Silbey received MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) Global Seed Fund Grants for the study of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) blended communities in Mongolia and France as part of a cross-national study that also includes India and Japan.

Graham Jones received Alumni Class Funds to further his research on “MOOCs and the Ethnography of Media Socialization.”

In the wider world, our faculty received a number of grants and prizes for their work. Erica James's book, *Democratic Insecurities*, (University of California Press) won the 2013 Gordon K. and Sybille Lewis Award from the Caribbean Studies Association. Heather Paxson's book, *The Life of Cheese*, (University of California Press) received the 2013 Diana Forsythe Prize from the Society for the Anthropology of Work and the Committee on the Anthropology of Science, Technology, and Computing. Christine Walley's book, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*, (University of Chicago Press) received the CLR James Best Book Award as well as second place for the Victor Turner Prize for Ethnographic Writing. Walley also received a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to prepare and preserve, digitize, and catalog the Southeast Chicago Historical Museum collection.

This year Anthropology hosted several visiting scholars, postdocs, and students. Professor Heather MacIndoe from the University of Massachusetts spent a second year with us as a visiting scholar. Michele Friedner was reappointed as a postdoctoral fellow. We had four postdoctoral fellows join us this year: Arthur Chia (Singapore University of Technology and Design), David Jaclin (University of Montreal), Maria Vidart-Delgado (Rice University), and Benjamin Wurgaft (The New School for Social Research). Our visiting students this year included Edmee Ballif (University of Lausanne, Switzerland), Ana Bersani (State University of Campinas, Brazil), Duygu Kasdogan (York University, Toronto), Ozgur Rahsan Cetrez (Sabanci University, Turkey), and Liliane Umubyeyi (ENS Cachan Paris).

At the conclusion of the academic year, Anthropology faculty, postdoctoral students, and staff convened a one-day retreat to review the department's accomplishments and plans for the next five years. Central research and teaching foci were identified (global health and medical humanities, documentary film ethnography, and digital learning and media socialization) and will be incorporated into a strategic five-year plan.

Teaching and Curriculum

Anthropology continues the work of developing an online module, consisting of skill-building exercises and interactivity of fieldwork. When it is completed, this project will be used as part of MITx. In addition, two members of Anthropology have continued to be active members of MITx committees. Graham Jones and Susan Silbey served on the Research Task Force, and Silbey chaired the MITx Subcommittee of the Faculty Policy Committee. Silbey also served on the MITx Data Policy Committee. Professor Walley is the Chair of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences's (SHASS) Subcommittee on the Humanities Requirement.

As has been the case for several years, faculty participation in the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society (HASTS), as well as PhD programs in the Sloan School of Management and Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), continues to be well in evidence with faculty members serving as graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees. Professor Helmreich served on 15 dissertation committees (five as principal advisor) and two exam committees. Professors Jackson and James each served on one dissertation committee. Professor Jones served on three dissertation committees (two as principal advisor). Professor Paxson served on 10 dissertation committees (eight as principal advisor). Professor Silbey served on 11 dissertation committees (three as principal advisor). Professor Walley served on five dissertation committees (two as principal advisor).

Publications

Professor Buyandelger's book, *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia* was published in November 2013 by the University of Chicago Press. She also authored an article, "Millennial Haunting: The Social Life of Ghosts, Shamanism, and Memory against Culture in Postsocialist Mongolia" in *Cultural Anthropology*.

Professor Helmreich authored two articles for *Current Anthropology*: “Potential Energy and the Body Electric: Cardiac Waves, Brain Waves, and the Making of Quantities into Qualities” and “The Anthropology of Potentiality in Biomedicine: An Introduction to Supplement 7” (with Karen-Sue Taussig and Klaus Hoeyer). He also published “Seashell Sound” in *Cabinet* and “*Homo microbis*: The Human Microbiome, Figural, Literal, Political” in *Thresholds*. His manuscript *Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of Biology and Beyond*, is under contract at Princeton University Press. A chapter entitled “Chimeric Sensing” was included in *Florian Heckler: Chimerizations*.

Professor Jackson reviewed *Rainforest Warriors: Human Rights on Trial* (University of Pennsylvania Press) for *American Ethnologist*.

Professor Jones wrote “Slower than the Eye: Time, Artifice, and Concealment’s Revelations” for *Jamie Isenstein: Will Return*.

Professor Paxson published “The Art of the Monger” in *Limn* and “A Craft with Soul” in *Alimentarium*. Together with Stefan Helmreich, Paxson also published “The Perils and Promises of Microbial Abundance: Novel Natures and Model Ecosystems, from Artisanal Cheese to Alien Seas” in *Social Studies of Science*.

Professor Silbey published “What Makes a Social Science of Law: Doubling the Social in Socio-Legal Studies” in *Exploring the ‘Socio’ of Socio-Legal Studies* (Dermot Feenan, ed.; Palgrave Macmillan), as well as two articles in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*: “Organizational Challenges to Regulatory Compliance: A New Common Sense About Regulation” and “Constructing Consequences for Compliance” (with her former student, Ruthanne Huising, now on the faculty at McGill University). In addition, she published a memorial to her dissertation advisor, Egon Bittner, in *Ethnographic Studies*.

Professor Walley published “Class Diaries: Reflections on Michael Apter’s *Up Series*” for *Public Books*, as well as “‘Transmedia’ Conversations: Working Class Studies and Expanding Audiences,” for *Working Class Perspectives*.

Presentations

Professor Buyandelger gave a talk at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting in Chicago entitled “Tragic Spirits: Shamanism and a Production of Agency and Identity against Postsocialist Spiritual Publics,” on a panel she co-organized. Buyandelger also gave a freshman seminar guest lecture at Tufts University on production of the past after socialism in Mongolia. She also organized a panel on “Memory, Narrative, and Violence among Contemporary Mongolians and Mongols on the Margins of Russia and China,” at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Philadelphia.

Professor Helmreich gave a talk entitled “Waves across Media” at the annual meetings of the Society for the Social Study of Science. He presented “Micro Multi Biology, with notes on the Microbiome, Racialization, and Reification” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago. He also gave a talk entitled “The Water Next Time: Changing Wavescapes

in the Anthropocene” at “Changing Climates,” at the Center for 21st Century Studies (C21) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and at the Meet the Author session of “Oceanic Studies: Seas as Sites and Subjects of Interdisciplinary Inquiry,” a Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship workshop sponsored by the Social Science Research Council in Berkeley, California.

Professor Jackson gave a talk on “Changes in Fieldnotes’ Role Over the Past Thirty Years in US Anthropology” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago. She also served as a discussant for a session called “Voicing Indigeneity in Print” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

Professor James gave a talk entitled “‘Bad Deeds’: Sham Mortgages, Straw Buyers, Foreclosure Scams, and the Defrauding of Haitians in Boston” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago. She served as a discussant on a panel called “The Killable Subject” at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. James also convened a weeklong advanced seminar at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There, she presented her research on faith-based charities and the security state and organized a group of senior scholars in a workshop that will result in an edited volume under the School for Advanced Research imprimatur.

Professor Jones was panelist and panel organizer for “Anthropology in and of the Age of MOOCs” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

Professor Paxson gave talks on topics related to her research on artisanal cheesemaking at the University of Wisconsin, Tufts, NYU, Boston University, and the American Cheese Society Annual Meetings in Madison, WI. She presented “Crafting Knowledge: The Questions that Bind Artisan Cheesemakers and their Ethnographer” at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago, and “Documenting Safety, Hiding Risk” (with Jillian Cavanaugh) at the annual meeting of the American Ethnological Society in Boston. She also co-organized a two-day exploratory seminar on “The Re-Invention of Food” at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

Professor Silbey gave several talks this year both in the United States and abroad. At École normale supérieure (ENS) de Cachan, she presented “What is the Science in the Social Science of Law.” She also gave a talk entitled “Rotten Apples or Rotting Barrel” to the Research Committee on the Sociology of Law. Silbey spoke in the University of Minnesota’s Department of Sociology on “Governing Inside the Organization: Interpreting Regulation and Compliance.”

Professor Walley presented several talks on the *Exit Zero Project*, including talks at the Calumet Heritage Conference, Harvard University, and the Lutheran School of Theology. She also presented a paper at a panel she co-organized at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago entitled “Revisiting the Chicago School from a Formerly Industrial Urban Hinterland: Southeast Chicago and the Challenges of Contemporary Ethnography.”

Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology Program faculty members served on a wide range of committees and boards at MIT. Professor Buyandelger served as the minor advisor for Anthropology and as the concentration advisor for Asian and Asian Diaspora Studies. Professor Helmreich served on the Kelly-Douglas Prize committee, the Levitan Prize committee, the Committee on Animal Care, the Center for the Arts, Science, and Technology, and the Visiting Artists Committee. Professor Jackson has catalogued and donated more than 700 slides from her 1968-1970 field research in the Northwest Amazon to the Rotch Library. Professor James served as the Anthropology undergraduate officer and on the steering committee for Community Giving at MIT. Professor Jones served as a freshman advisor, on the HASTS Faculty Diversity Committee, as anthropology concentration advisor (spring term), and continued his role as the concentration advisor for Religious Studies. Professor Paxson began her role as director of graduate studies for HASTS, served as a freshman advisor, and served on the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement, as well as on the SHASS Educational Advisory Committee. She also served on the Commencement Committee. Professor Silbey served as secretary of the Faculty as well as on the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC). She was chair of the MITx Subcommittee of the FPC, and also served on the MITx Basic Research Task Force and on the MITx Data Privacy and Policy Committee. Professor Walley served as the anthropology concentration advisor (fall term), and as the faculty advisor for the Program in Environmental Governance and Sustainability. She also served as the Chair of the SHASS Sub-committee on the Humanities Requirement.

Outside MIT, Professor Buyandelger was a reviewer for *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Association* and referee for *American Ethnologist*. Professor Helmreich served on the editorial boards of *American Ethnologist*, *Environmental Humanities*, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, and *Science as Culture*, and on the advisory board for *Culture, Theory and Critique*. He was a reviewer for *Cultural Anthropology*, *Current Anthropology*, *Animation*, and for Cornell University Press, Duke University Press, and the University of Minnesota Press. Professor Jackson served on the board of directors for Cultural Survival, editorial boards of *Antipoda: Revista de Antropología y Arqueología Universidad de los Andes*, and the *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*. She is also on the international advisory board of *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* and served on the steering committee of the Network of Concerned Anthropologists. Professor Jones served on the National Science Foundation (NSF) Advisory Panel for Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants in Cultural Anthropology. He served on the editorial committee for *Ateliers d'Anthropologie* and was an article and manuscript reviewer for *HAU*, *Language@Internet*, and *New Media & Society*. Professor Paxson served on the editorial boards for the *Oxford Companion to Cheese* and *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. She also reviewed manuscripts for the *Journal of Rural Studies*, *Agriculture and Human Values*, and *Ethnography*, and served on the American Ethnological Society Program Committee for the American Anthropological Association meetings. Professor Silbey served as chair of the Law & Society Association's Publication Committee as well as their membership committee. She continues her work as an editor for Cambridge University Press and Annual Reviews of Law and Social Science, and on the editorial board of several other scholarly journals. Most importantly, Professor Silbey convened a workshop (with Mitchell Stevens of

Stanford University) at Asilomar June 1-4, 2014, entitled “Ethical Learning Research in Higher Education.” Professor Walley was an elected delegate of the Labor Committee, served as a board member for the Public Lab for Open Technology and Science, and on the Advisory Body to the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association. She also served as a reviewer for the journals *Human Organization* and *the Journal of East African Studies*.

Susan S. Silbey

Program Head and Professor of Sociology and Anthropology

Leon and Anne Goldberg Professor of Humanities