

Anthropology

Personnel and Administrative Changes

At the outset of AY2015, beginning on July 1, 2014, Elting E. Morison Professor of Anthropology Stefan Helmreich began serving as Head of the Anthropology Program. Leon and Anne Goldberg Professor Susan Silbey stepped down as Program Head after eight years of service in that role. Heather Paxson continued in the role of Director of Graduate Studies in the History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society (HASTS) Doctoral Program, and was also promoted to Full Professor of Anthropology. In fall 2014, Professor Jean Jackson retired after 42 years of service to the program. Amy Moran-Thomas began her appointment as assistant professor in May 2015.

Highlights of the Year

Professor Paxson was given a named chair, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Humanities. Associate Professor of Anthropology Erica James launched a new initiative, the Global Health and Medical Humanities Initiative (GHMHI), with funding from the Provost, the SHASS Dean's Office and the Todman Family Fund. GHMHI hosted a series of well-attended talks on contemporary issues in global health, including on the recent Ebola epidemic. Professor Helmreich was selected to give the 2014 Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Rochester. Together with Associate Professor of Anthropology Graham Jones and Professor Paxson, Helmreich received the Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Award for Excellence in Education to fund a new undergraduate class, The Meaning of Life. Class of 1956 Career Development Associate Professor of Anthropology Manduhai Buyandelger received a fellowship from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey, enabling her to spend 2014–2015 writing her next book, an ethnographic account of how women candidates have fared in recent parliamentary elections in Mongolia. Buyandelger's book *Tragic Spirits* won the 2014 Francis L.K. Hsu Book Prize from the Society for East Asian Anthropology. In September 2014, Professor Helmreich, with Professor Caroline Jones in Architecture, planned and hosted Seeing/Sounding/Sensing, a two-day international art and science symposium. Keynoted by Bruno Latour and sponsored by MIT's new Mellon Foundation-funded Center for Art, Science, and Technology, the Seeing/Sounding/Sensing symposium drew several hundred attendees. Professor Graham Jones received a Mellon Foundation New Directions Fellowship, an award permitting him to take up substantive training in a new field, Chinese language training. Professor Silbey received funding from the Russell Sage Foundation, where she spent her 2014 sabbatical year.

Anthropology continued to gather MIT funds for ongoing research projects. Professors Buyandelger, Jones, and Silbey received another year of funding from 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 also including India and Japan. Professor Silbey received funding from the Tata Center for Technology and Design for "Environmental Sanitation Solutions to Improve Female Workforce Participation."

Professors Silbey and Jones received continued funding from NSF, as well as MIT funds, for their project on MOOCs and media socialization. Professors Helmreich and Paxson were the PIs on three NSF doctoral dissertation research improvement grants.

This year Anthropology once again hosted several postdocs and visiting students. Arthur Chia, Maria Vidart-Delgado, and Benjamin Wurgaft continued as second-year postdoctoral fellows. Seth Hannah was hired as a postdoctoral associate to teach subjects in connection with the Global Health and Medical Humanities Initiative (GHMHI). Else Vogel from the University of Amsterdam was a visiting student for the year.

Teaching and Curriculum

Professor James served on the Committee on Prehealth Advising and on the SHASS MCAT Committee. As a result of researching changes to the 2015 MCAT exam, she received funding for postdoctoral support to offer two new undergraduate courses in sociology and medical sociology, which were taught by Seth Hannah. Professor James is also collaborating with colleagues in the School of Science and in the Institute for Mechanical Engineering and Systems (IMES) to propose an interdisciplinary minor in health. She also developed two new courses, “Global Mental Health” and “Infections and Inequalities” to be offered next academic year and team-taught with professor of biological engineering Arup Chakraborty and professor of biology Dennis Kim. As mentioned above, Professors Helmreich, Paxson, and Jones received D’Arbeloff funding to develop a new course, *The Meaning of Life*, which, along with *Infections and Inequalities*, will most likely become a HEX subject. Professor Paxson served on the Subcommittee on the Communications Requirement and the SHASS Education Advisory Committee, and developed a course, *Gender, Sexuality and Society*, for the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). Professor Jones served on the SHASS Education Advisory Committee. Professor Silbey chaired the *MITx* Policy Committee and was a member of the Entity, Education Program Committee.

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 in the Department of Urban Studies (DUSP), continues to be well in evidence, with faculty members serving as graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees. Helmreich served on 13 dissertation committees (five as principal advisor), James served on two dissertation committees, and Jones served on six dissertation committees (three as principal advisor). Paxson, in addition to her role as director of graduate studies, served on six dissertation committees (three as principal advisor). Silbey served on 13 dissertation committees, and Walley served on six dissertation committees (one as principal advisor).

Publications

Professor Buyandelger spent the year writing a draft of a book on parliamentary elections and gender in contemporary Mongolia. She also had an article, “Engineers and Shamans as Heralds of the New Mongolia,” published in *American Anthropologist*.

Professor Helmreich co-authored an article with Professor Paxson, “The Perils and Promises of Microbial Abundance: Novel Natures and Model Ecosystems, from Artisan

Cheese to Alien Seas," in *Social Studies of Science*. Helmreich also published "Blood, Waves: On Italo Calvino's 'Blood, Sea,'" in *Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain/Vapor/Ray*; "Tactics of Multispecies Ethnography" (with Eben Kirksey and Craig Schuetze) in *The Multispecies Salon: Gleanings from a Para-Site*; "The Left Hand of Nature and Culture" in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*; and "Remixing the Voyager Interstellar Record: Or, As Extraterrestrials Might Listen" in a special issue of *Journal of Sonic Studies*.

Professor James authored "The United Nations in Haiti" in the online publication *Island Luminous*.

Professor Jones published an article, "Secrecy," in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*; "MOOCs as Media World," an introduction to "Vital Topics Forum: Anthropology in and of MOOCs," a special section he guest-edited for *American Anthropologist*; "Reported Speech as an Authentication Tactic in Computer-Mediated Communication" in *Indexing Authenticity*; and a review of "The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters: Gender, Secrecy, and Fraternity in Italian Masonic Lodges" by Lilith Mahmud, in *American Anthropologist*.

Professor Paxson's article "The Re-Invention of Food: Connections and Mediations" appeared in a special issue of *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. Other publications included "Re-Inventing a Tradition of Invention: Entrepreneurialism as Heritage in American Artisan Cheesemaking" in *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*; "Microbiopolitics" in *The Multispecies Salon: Gleanings from a Para-Site*; and "A Craft with Soul: Local Engagement and the Global Market" in *Alimentarium*.

Professor Silbey published three articles: "Governing Inside the Organization: Interpreting Regulation and Compliance" in *American Journal of Sociology* (with Garry Gray); "Availability of Law Redux: The Correlation of Rights and Duties" in *Law and Society Review*; and "American Courts in Public Culture and Consciousness" in *Daedalus*.

Presentations

Professor Buyandelger presented a talk, "Millennial Haunting: The Social Life of Ghosts, Shamanism, and Memory Against Culture in Postsocialist Mongolia," at the annual meetings of both the American Ethnological Society and the Association for Asian Studies, and at Harvard University and UC Santa Cruz. At the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Professor Buyandelger chaired and organized a panel, "The Art of Electioneering: Interests, Discussions and Agreements in Electoral Competition," and presented a paper, "Intellect-full Women: Creative Electoral Strategies and Parliamentary Politics in Postsocialist Mongolia." At UC Santa Barbara, she gave a talk, "The Social Life of Ghosts: Shamanism, Buddhism, and Counter-Memory in Postsocialist Mongolia," and at Harvard University, she gave a presentation, "One Thousand Steps to Parliament: Femininity, Media, and Women's Strategies for Gaining Visibility During Parliamentary Elections in Mongolia."

In October 2014, at the University of Rochester, Professor Helmreich delivered the 53rd Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture, entitled "Waves: An Anthropology of Scientific Things." He also gave introductory comments at the Seeing/Sounding/Sensing symposium at MIT. In summer 2014, Helmreich's book, *Alien Ocean*, was the subject of an Author Meets Critics session at the meetings of the Society for the Social Study of Science in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Professor James gave an invited lecture, “Health as a Human Right or Human Rights and Health?” at the GlobeMed Annual Philanthropy Gala. At the AAA annual meeting, she gave two talks: “Heritage, Identity, Place, and Displacement: Anthropologists Think About the Past,” and “The Ethics of Activist Anthropology.” She was invited to give a lecture, “Bureaucracy, Sorcery, and the Politics of Aid to Trauma Survivors in Haiti” for the Burchard Scholars seminar series at MIT. At the annual meeting of the American Ethnological Society, she gave a talk, “Chilling Charity: U.S. Antiterrorism Finance Regimes and the In/Visibility of the Gift.” At the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society of New England, she gave a talk, “Dominion over the Dead: A Family’s Story of Race, History and the Politics of Heritage.” She also gave a talk for MIT’s freshman pre-orientation program.

Professor Jones gave the talk “Intimacy, Publicity, and Disciplinarity in Massive Open Online Courses” at the University of Texas and at Rice University. At the American Ethnological Society’s spring meeting, he gave a presentation, “Secrecy’s Secret.” At the MIT Museum, he gave a presentation, “Cultural Perspectives on Play.” At the AAA annual meeting, he presented two papers: “MOOCs as Media-Work: Socialization and Ideology,” and “On Things Immaterial: Data, Users, and Participation in Digital Technologies.”

Professor Paxson gave the keynote lecture, “Raw (Milk) Politics: Safety and Skill in Small-Scale Cheesemaking,” at Tufts University at the symposium The Work of Culturing: Labor and Local Food. She also gave talks on topics related to her research on artisanal cheesemaking at Harvard University, Brandeis University, and Duke University.

Professor Silbey was the keynote speaker at the annual northeast meeting of the College Safety Health Environmental Association, where she gave a talk, “Taming Prometheus: Talk of Safety and Culture.” She also gave this talk at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, UCLA, and MIT. She gave three talks at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association: “Safety on the Frontlines,” “Honoring the Editor,” and “Studying Legal Actors and Agencies” (also given at Harvard Law School). At the American Academy of Arts and Sciences annual meeting, she spoke on “Courts in American Popular Culture.” She gave talks on topics related to her research on regulations and compliance at Cornell University, McGill University, and the University of Pennsylvania. She gave a talk, “Ethnographies of the Legal Profession,” at Harvard Law School, and at Georgetown Law School, she gave a talk titled “Rotten Apples or a Rotting Barrel: Confidence Games among Lawyers and Accountants.”

Professor Walley gave lectures after screenings of her film *Exit Zero* at Georgetown University, Northeastern University, New York University, Fordham University, Brandeis University, Townsend University, Northwestern University, Concordia University, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University. At the AAA annual meeting, she presented a paper, “The Exit Zero Project: A Transmedia Exploration of Multigenerational Storytelling about Chicago’s Former Steel Communities,” and at the April Society for Cultural Anthropology meeting, she presented the paper “Brownfields as ‘Open Space’: Redefining ‘Nature’ in a Postindustrial Landscape.”

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 (spring term) and as concentration advisor for Asian and Asian Diaspora Studies (spring term). Professor Helmreich became head of Anthropology in July and served on the Kelly-Douglas Prize Committee, the HASTS graduate admissions committee, the MIT Center for Art, Science, and Technology Symposium committee, a faculty search committee for the program in Science, Technology and Society (STS), and the STS 2014–2015 Colloquium committee. Professor James served as the Anthropology undergraduate officer (fall term) and as a member of the committee on prehealth advising, the Community Giving at MIT steering committee, the search committee for MIT Libraries director, the Taskforce on MIT's Role in Reducing the Cost of Healthcare, the SHASS MCAT 2015 committee, the HASTS admissions committee, and the Community Service Fund board. Professor Jones served as freshman advisor and concentration advisor for both Anthropology and Religious Studies, and served on the SHASS faculty diversity committee and the SHASS education advisory committee. Professor Paxson continued in her role as director of graduate studies for HASTS, and in the fall she became the minor advisor in Anthropology. She served as a freshman advisor and served on the Institute Sub-Committee on the Communications Requirement; the SHASS educational advisory committee; the Commencement committee; the WGS steering committee; the organizing committee for the WGS symposium *Consuming Food, Producing Culture*; the HASTS graduate admissions committee; and the STS faculty tenure/promotion committee. From January to the end of June, Professor Silbey served as secretary of the faculty, served on the faculty policy committee, chaired the *MITx* policy committee, and served on the HASTS steering committee, BPS Sloan admissions committee, and HASTS admissions committee. She was also department head until the end of June. Professor Walley served as the Anthropology undergraduate officer (spring term) and served on the STS faculty tenure/promotion committee.

Outside MIT, Professor Buyandelger was a reviewer for *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *American Ethnologist*, *American Anthropologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Ethnos*, *Inner Asia*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *University of Hawaii Press*, *HAU*, and Berg Publishers. 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* and *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, and Technoscience*. He was a reviewer for *BioSocieties*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Environment and Society*, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, and *Visual Anthropology Review*, and for Cornell University Press, University of California Press, and University of Minnesota Press. Professor James was a reviewer for *Security Dialogue* and for *Territory, Politics, Governance*. Professor Jones served on the editorial committee for *Ateliers d'Anthropologie* and was a reviewer for *American Anthropologist*, *Language in Society*, Mouton de Gruyter, and Routledge Press. Professor Paxson served on the editorial boards for the *Oxford Companion to Cheese* and *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. Paxson was on the advisory board for the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies*, reviewed articles for the *Journal of Material Culture*, *Area*, and *Food and Foodways*, and reviewed manuscripts for Princeton University Press, University of California Press, and Palgrave Books. Professor Paxson

also served on the advisory board of the Cheese of Choice Coalition and was an NSF individual research grant reviewer. Professor Silbey continued her work as an editor for Cambridge University Press and served on the editorial boards of *Quantitative Sociology*, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, *Regulation and Governance*, and *Engaging Science, Technology and Society*. She was a co-convenor of the Asilomar Workshop for Learner Research and reviewed the National Research Council's Report on Laboratory Safety. Professor Walley chaired the Committee on Labor Relations for the American Anthropological Association, was elected as a representative on the AAA's Committee on Labor Relations, served as a board member for the Public Lab for Open Technology and Science, reviewed NSF proposals, and served as a reviewer for the *Forum for Development Studies* and *Human Organization* and for Harvard University Press and the University of California Press.

Stefan Helmreich

Program Head and Elting E. Morison Professor of Anthropology