

Anthropology

Personnel and Administrative Changes

During academic year 2017, Leon and Anne Goldberg Professor Susan Silbey stepped in as interim head of the Anthropology Program for fall 2016 while Elting E. Morison Professor of Anthropology Stefan Helmreich took sabbatical leave. In spring 2017, Professor Helmreich resumed the role of head. A successful promotion case was conducted during spring 2017 for Associate Professor Graham Jones, who received tenure on July 1, 2017. Professor Christine Walley completed her term as director of graduate studies for the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society (HASTS); the position rotated to a colleague on the History Faculty as of July 1, 2017.

Highlights of the Year

Associate Professor with Tenure Manduhai Buyandelger, holder of an MIT Class of 1956 Career Development Chair, continued work on her second book, *A Thousand Steps to Parliament: Women Running for Election in Postsocialist Mongolia*, under preliminary contract with the University of Chicago Press. In September, she gave a keynote address at the opening of the Center for Mongolian Studies Initiatives at the University of California at Berkeley, speaking on “Electionization and Postsocialist Subjectivity: Women Running for Parliamentary Elections in Mongolia.” Buyandelger also received a faculty research grant for 2016–2018 from the Samuel Tak Lee MIT Real Estate Entrepreneurship Lab to undertake an ethnographic project titled “Disjuncture and Resilience: A Holistic Approach to Real Estate Development in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.” Professor Helmreich received the 2016 Michelle Kendrick Book Prize from the Society for Literature, Science and the Arts for *Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of Biology and Beyond* (Princeton University Press, 2016). He spent his fall sabbatical in the Netherlands. Associate Professor with Tenure Erica James continued directing the Global Health and Medical Humanities Initiative, with funding from the provost, the SHASS (School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences) Dean’s Office, and the Todman Family Fund. Professor Jones completed his second book, *Magic’s Reason: An Anthropology of Analogy*, forthcoming with the University of Chicago Press on the fall 2017 list. Assistant Professor Amy Moran-Thomas continued work on her manuscript on health and environment in Belize, *Metabola: Planetary Health and the Global Diabetes Epidemic*, under contract with the University of California Press. Professor Heather Paxson, holder of a William R. Kenan, Jr. Professorship in Anthropology, spent her sabbatical during the fall in the Netherlands. She was one of two organizers of a three-day joint European Research Council and Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research conference in September, held in Oslo, Norway, on the topic of “Food and Its Entanglements.” Paxson also served as the program chair for the annual meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science, which will be held in Boston in August–September 2017. Professor Silbey served in AY2017 as faculty chair-elect, as interim head of Anthropology during the fall term, on the MIT Faculty Policy Committee, and on search committees for a staff member for the Environmental Health and Safety Program and for a faculty member for the Institute for Data, Systems, and Society. Professor Walley continued to screen her 90-minute documentary *Exit Zero: An Industrial*

Family Story (Chris Boebel, director, Christine Walley, producer and co-writer), winner of the Studs Terkel Media Prize from the Working Class Studies Association, showing the film in Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, as well as in a sponsored screening at MIT.

Anthropology continued to gather funds from MIT and beyond for ongoing research projects. Walley received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to help support a project titled “History from Chicago’s Former Steel Mill Neighborhoods: Digitizing and Providing Access to the Southeast Chicago Historical Museum Collection,” which builds upon her *Exit Zero* work. Silbey and Jones were principal investigators on two National Science Foundation (NSF) Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants.

In AY2017, Anthropology once again hosted several visiting students and postdoctoral researchers. Elizabeth Rule came to us from the Department of American Studies at Brown University as a 2016–2017 Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellow and was supervised by Amy Moran-Thomas. Ilyas Omar Abukar came to us from the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park as a 2016–2017 Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellow and was supervised by Erica James. Jingru Pan, a PhD student at Tsinghua University, began her visiting student appointment with us in March 2016 and is supervised by Graham Jones. Lai Sze Tso began the first year of a two-year postdoctoral associate term, supervised by Erica James, and taught sociology subjects in connection with the Global Health and Medical Humanities Initiative. Associate Professor Heather MacIndoe, from the Department of Public Policy and Public Affairs in the McCormack Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, joined us as visiting scholar.

Teaching and Curriculum

Buyandelger taught 21A.01 How Culture Works, one of our core classes, in the fall. Helmreich taught the graduate seminar 21A.859J Social Theory and Analysis in the spring. James taught 21A.302J Dilemmas in Biomedical Ethics: Playing God or Doing Good? in the fall and 21A.300 Practicum in Global Health and Development, an undergraduate class that meets with a graduate-level version, in the spring. During spring 2017, James also served as a co-instructor for HST.934J Introduction to Global Medicine: Bioscience, Technologies, Disparities, Strategies, a three-unit class offered by the Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology Program. Jones co-taught with Paxson a new subject, 21A.157 The Meaning of Life during the spring term. The class was extremely popular and was profiled on the MIT homepage. In the fall, Amy Moran-Thomas revived a dormant subject, 21A.301 Disease and Health: Culture, Society, and Ethics, and also taught 21A.500J Technology and Culture. In the spring, she taught our other core subject, 21A.00 Introduction to Anthropology. In addition to supervising one student in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, Moran-Thomas supervised an independent study with a student minoring in Anthropology; the student won a fellowship to continue her research after graduation. In the spring term, Paxson taught a graduate seminar, 21A.509J Art, Craft, Science, and co-taught 21A.157 The Meaning of Life. Silbey taught both of our graduate-level research methods classes: 21A.819 Qualitative Research Methods in the fall and 21A.809 Designing Empirical Research in the Social Sciences in the spring. Silbey also was a freshman advisor for three students during spring 2017 and served on the Curriculum Committee for the Institute for Data, Systems, and Society. Walley taught a graduate seminar, 21A.429J Environmental Conflict and Social

Change in the fall and co-taught, along with Chris Boebel, media development director of the Office of Digital Learning, her 18-unit documentary filmmaking class, 21A.550J DV Lab: Documenting Science Through Video and New Media.

As has been the case for several years, faculty participation in the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society, as well as in PhD programs in the Sloan School of Management and in the Department of Urban Studies continues to be well in evidence, with faculty members serving as graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees. Helmreich served on 21 doctoral committees (seven as principal advisor; five were outside MIT [one at Stanford University, one at Wageningen University, the Netherlands, one at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and one at York University, Canada]). James served on three dissertation committees. Jones served on five dissertation committees (two as principal advisor; three were outside MIT [one at University of California, Los Angeles, one at Harvard University, and one at Columbia University]) and was faculty advisor to one undergraduate major. Moran-Thomas served on one dissertation committee. Paxson served on five dissertation committees (two as principal advisor; two were outside MIT [one at Harvard and one at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands]). Silbey served on eight dissertation committees (all as chair), and Walley served on 11 dissertation committees (seven as principal advisor; three were outside MIT [two at Harvard and one at Lausanne University, Switzerland]). Walley was also advisor to two undergraduate majors and served as director of graduate studies for the HASTS program.

Publications

Buyandelger continued work on her book, *A Thousand Steps to Parliament: Women Running for Election in Postsocialist Mongolia*, under preliminary contract with the University of Chicago Press. She published a newsletter piece called “Mongolia’s Self-Styled Female Parliamentary Candidates” for *Anthropology News*’s December 2016 issue.

Helmreich published two peer-reviewed journal articles, “Gravity’s Reverb: Listening to Space-Time, or Articulating the Sounds of Gravitational Wave Detection,” in *Cultural Anthropology*, and “The Genders of Waves,” in *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly*. He also published four peer-reviewed commentaries, in *Current Anthropology*, *Twentieth-Century Music*, *Cultural Anthropology*, and *New Geographies*. Four of his articles were reprinted in edited volumes/readers and three were translated into other languages (Portuguese, French, and Italian). Further reprints and translations (into French and into Japanese) are forthcoming.

James published two chapters in edited volumes: “‘If You Remember, You Can’t Live’: Trauma, Insecurity, and the F/utility of ‘PTSD’ in Haiti” in *Living and Dying in the Contemporary World* (University of California, 2016) and “Culture, Trauma, and the Social Life of PTSD in Haiti” in *Culture and PTSD: Trauma in Global and Historical Perspective* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). She also published a book review in 2017 in *American Ethnologist*.

Jones completed a new book manuscript, *Magic’s Reason: An Anthropology of Analogy*, forthcoming with the University of Chicago Press. He published “The Ethnography of

Inscriptive Speech” (with Bambi B. Schieffelin) in *eFieldnotes: Makings of Anthropology in a Digital World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). He also published a book review in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* and an article commentary in *Current Anthropology*.

Moran-Thomas published “Breakthroughs for Whom?: Global Diabetes Care and Equitable Design” in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and “Mine” in the *Cultural Anthropology* “Hot Spots” online series. She also published a commentary on the website *Somatosphere: Science, Medicine, Anthropology*. She continued work on her book *Metabola: Planetary Health and the Global Diabetes Epidemic*.

Paxson published several chapters in edited volumes: “Rethinking Food and its Eaters: Opening the Black Boxes of Safety and Nutrition,” in *Handbook of Food and Anthropology* (Bloomsbury, 2016), “When Chèvre was Weird: Hippie Taste, Technoscience, and the Revival of American Artisanal Food-making,” in *Groovy Science: Science, Technology, and the American Counterculture* (Chicago University Press 2016), “Craftsmanship and Quality in Artisanal Cheesemaking,” in *Food and Architecture* (Bloomsbury, 2016), and “Participant-observation and Interviewing Techniques” in *Food Culture: Anthropology, Linguistics, and Food Studies* (Berghahn, 2017). She wrote several entries for *The Oxford Companion to Cheese* (2016), for which she also served as an area editor. She also published a commentary on the website *Somatosphere: Science, Medicine, Anthropology*. She also saw one of her earlier articles reprinted and has a translation of another piece forthcoming in French.

Silbey published “LSR @ 50: Where Are We Now?” in *Law & Society Review*, “Why Do So Many Women Who Study Engineering Leave the Field?” in the *Harvard Business Review*, and “The Big Reason Women Drop Out of Engineering Isn’t in Class,” in *Dow Jones Market Watch*.

Walley published “Trump’s Election and the ‘White Working Class’: What We Missed,” in *American Ethnologist* in April 2017.

Presentations

Buyandelger gave a keynote at the opening of the Center for Mongolian Studies Initiatives, at the University of California, Berkeley in September 2016. Titled “Electionization and Postsocialist Subjectivity: Women Running for Parliamentary Elections in Mongolia,” it was coupled with a master class she taught that month in Berkeley Anthropology. In October, she presented “From Secrecy to Flamboyance and In-Between: Shamanism, Migration and Urban Life in Mongolia” at the conference on Religion and the City at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, Germany. In November, she gave a talk, “A Census Changes Everything,” at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Helmreich gave a talk, “Waves, Trapped,” at the meetings of the European Association of Social Anthropologists in Milan, Italy in July 2016. At the meetings of the Society for the Social Study of Science, in Barcelona, Spain, in September, he gave a paper titled “Elementary Forms of Elemental Media” as well as a commentary, “Ghost Lineages on Ghost Acres,” on an Author Meets Critics session for *Ghost Stories for Darwin: The Science*

of *Variation and the Politics of Diversity*, by Banu Subramaniam. He was a discussant for the “Environmental Alterities” workshop at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, in September, and a commentator at the Sixth International Festival of Audiovisual Anthropology at the Triumph Art Gallery, Moscow, Russia, also in September. He delivered “An Anthropology of Waves” at the National Research University, Higher School of Economics, in Moscow in September; “The Wildness of Waves,” at the Westwerk Club Gallery, Hamburg, Germany, in October; “Alien Ocean: Life at Sea” at the Institut für Ethnologie und Kulturwissenschaft, Universität Bremen, Bremen, Germany, in November; and “*Homo microbis*” at “Microbial Relatings” held at Micropia, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in November. He presented “Wave Law” at “Ocean Legalities: The Law and Life of the Sea,” at the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, State University of New York Buffalo Law School, Buffalo, New York, in February. He gave a talk titled “The Water Next Time: Changing Wavescapes in the Anthropocene,” which he presented three times: at “Energy Worlds—in Experiment,” as a keynote at the IT University of Copenhagen in October; in the Critical Climate Thinking Series, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, in March, and at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers, Boston, Massachusetts, in April. Also in April, he gave introductory comments at *Being Material*, a symposium hosted by MIT’s Center for Art, Science and Technology. He gave a commentary on Kathleen Stewart’s “Worldly Compositions, or Six Writing Experiments Tangled in the Weight of Worlds” at Thinking Feeling: An Affect Symposium held at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, in May. He gave a keynote lecture, “Waves, North and South,” at the Sixth Brazilian Anthropology of Science and Technology Meeting in São Paulo, Brazil, in May. He also participated in a Skype Dialogue with Bodega Bay Marine Laboratory Biologist Tessa Hill, in the “Thinking with Scientists” series in the Science and Technology Studies Program, University of California at Davis, in June. He joined Robert Pinsky, US poet laureate, 1997–2000, in an on-stage discussion sponsored by Catalyst Conversations, at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, also in June.

James gave an invited lecture titled “‘If It’s Not Written Down, It Didn’t Happen’: Scriptural Economies at the Catholic Charities Haitian Multi-Service Center” for the Anthropology Colloquium at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in November 2016. She also gave a presentation titled “Pathologizing Haitian Independence: Race, Stereotypes, and the Biopolitics of Recognition” at the Ethnographic Theory Workshop, that same month at Washington University.

Jones delivered a talk titled “Creativity and Intercorporeality in an Interdisciplinary Circus Production” at the Montreal Working Group on Circus, Concordia University, in October 2016. He was also a panelist on a roundtable on “The Use of Computers in Anthropology” at November’s American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And he was a discussant on the “William A. Douglass Prize as Evidence of New Directions in Europeanist Anthropology” and the chair of “Fake: The First Annual Debate of Anthropological Keywords,” also at the meetings of the American Anthropological Association.

Moran-Thomas gave a paper titled “Food’s Entanglements with Life” at a workshop on “Food and Its Entanglements,” organized by Wim Van Daele and Heather Paxson at the University of Oslo, Norway in September 2016. She also gave an invited talk entitled,

“Blood Sugar Beside Itself: Epidemic Diabetes in the Postcolonial Caribbean” at the Harvard University Friday Morning Seminar in Culture, Medicine, and Global Mental Health, in October.

Paxson gave a talk titled “Moving Foods Across National Borders: Anticipatory Notes on Research to Come” at the workshop on “Food and its Entanglements,” organized by Wim Van Daele and Heather Paxson at the University of Oslo, Norway, in September 2016. She also presented “The Microbiopolitics of American Cheese: Taste, Safety and Risk in a Post- Industrializing Food Landscape” at the Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia, in October; “Infrastructures of NatureCulture in the Realm of the Intangible and Invisible,” a workshop led (with Helmreich) at the NatureCultures Lab, University of Bremen, Germany, also in October; “Food Safety Meets Biosecurity: Perishability and the Microbiopolitics of Trade,” at “Microbial Relatings” held at Micropia, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in November; “The Microbiopolitics of American Cheese: From Food Safety to Border Security,” at the Department of Cultural Geography, Wageningen University, the Netherlands, in November; and “On Microbiopolitics: From Food Safety to Biosecurity,” at the program in Environmental Humanities, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany, in December.

Silbey gave a keynote address called “Safety, Systems and Culture: What Do Environmental Health and Safety Systems Do,” at the Campus Safety Health and Environmental Management Association Annual Meeting in September 2016. She also presented “Why Do Biologists and Chemists Do Safety Differently: Achieving Regulatory Compliance Through Cultural Difference,” at an Economic Sociology Workshop, Northwestern University, in October. She gave a keynote address to the Law and Society Association, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, in December as well as a paper titled “Systems of Signs: Legal Culture and Local Politics,” at the Law and Society Association, Graduate Student Workshop, Griffith University. She delivered (in absentia) “Looking for Hegemony in All the Wrong Places: Critique, Context, and Collectivities in Studies of Legal Consciousness,” at the International Institute for the Sociology of Law, Oñati Spain, in March.

Walley gave many lectures after the screenings of her film, *Exit Zero*. These included “The Exit Zero Project: A Transmedia Exploration of Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago,” for the Comparative Media Studies Colloquium series at MIT in September. She offered a screening of *Exit Zero* at Columbia University, New York, in November, at the American Anthropological Association meetings in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in November, and was part of a roundtable on “Multimodal Anthropology.”

Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology faculty members served on a wide range of committees and boards at MIT. Buyandelger served as the minor and concentration advisor for Anthropology for the academic year, as well as working as the academic advisor for the unit. She served as Anthropology’s fall representative to the weekly HASTS Program Seminar. She also worked as a faculty mentor and liaison for MISTI’s (MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives) MIT Mongolia Program and served on the MIT Faculty Newsletter Committee. Helmreich returned to the headship of Anthropology in spring

2017, also rejoining the Steering Committee for the HASTS Program. He served as one of four symposium organizers for *Being Material*, an arts-humanities-science symposium sponsored by the MIT Center for Art, Science, and Technology, held in April 2017. He also served on the MIT Visiting Artists Committee. James served as a member of the Committee on Prehealth Advising as well as on the Future of the Libraries Taskforce. She also served as faculty mentor to Amy Moran-Thomas. Paxson served on MIT's Commencement Committee, on the Advisory Committee on Graduate Student Stipends (Office of the Dean for Graduate Education and the Vice President for Research), and on the Kelly-Douglas essay prize committee (SHASS). Silbey served as interim head of Anthropology. Walley continued the position of director of graduate studies for the Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society. She also maintained her involvement with MIT's First Generation Program.

Outside MIT, Buyandelger served on the editorial board of *North East Asian Anthropologies* and as a reviewer for Cornell University Press and Yale University Press. Helmreich served on the editorial boards of *American Ethnologist*, *Environmental Humanities*, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, and *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, and on the advisory board for *Culture, Theory and Critique* and *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, and Technoscience*. He was a reviewer of articles for *Leonardo*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Environmental Humanities*, *Political Geography*, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *Social Studies of Science*, as well as of manuscripts for Duke University Press and the University of California Press. James was a reviewer for *American Ethnologist*. Jones served as an NSF Dissertation Grants in Cultural Anthropology panelist and was a reviewer for the University of Chicago Press and the University of California Press. Moran-Thomas was a reviewer for *Medical Anthropology*. Jones served on the editorial board of *Ateliers d'Anthropologie*. He worked as a manuscript reviewer for *American Ethnologist* as well as for the University of California Press. Paxson served on the editorial boards of the *Oxford Companion to Cheese*, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, and *Engaging Science, Technology and Society*. She was on the Advisory Board of The Cheese of Choice Coalition and for the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies*. She reviewed articles for *American Anthropologist*, *Gastronomica*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, *Science as Culture*, *Engaging Science, Technology & Society*, and *Social Studies of Science*. Paxson was an NSF individual research grant reviewer and reviewed grant applications for the Radcliffe Institute and Northern Illinois University. She also served as the chair of the program committee for the Society for the Social Studies of Science for the organization's annual meeting of 2017. Silbey continues her work as an editor of *Studies in Law and Society* for Cambridge University Press, and was on the Editorial Board of *Quantitative Sociology*, and *Engaging Science, Technology and Society*. She reviewed for *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Regulation & Governance*. Walley was a member of the Committee on Labor Relations for the American Anthropological Association. She served as a jury prize panelist for the Margaret Mead Ethnographic Film Festival, Museum of Natural History, New York, in October.

Stefan Helmreich

Program Head

Elting E. Morison Professor of Anthropology