

Anthropology

Personnel and Administrative Changes

During academic year 2018–2019, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Anthropology Heather Paxson served as interim head of the Anthropology Program. Assistant Professor Amy Moran-Thomas was awarded the Alfred Henry and Jean Morrison Hayes Career Development Chair and was promoted to associate professor without tenure.

Highlights of the Year

This past year, the program hosted a successful colloquium series entitled “Elemental Forms of American Life.” In conjunction with colleagues in Science, Technology and Society (STS) and the History Section, the Anthropology Program also sponsored two public panel discussions, “Social Media and Democracy” and “Elections and Technology,” as part of the MIT Computational Cultures Initiative.

Professor Paxson organized and hosted a very successful invitational symposium on open access publishing in anthropology. With over 60 participants, the workshop brought together publishers, journal editors, librarians, research funders, and representatives from the major North American and European anthropological societies to workshop a proposed funding model for moving the discipline’s journals to an open access model. Professor Paxson also served as interim head of anthropology and continued her five-year term as co-editor of *Cultural Anthropology*, one of the discipline’s flagship journals, a position that carries with it an appointment to the executive committee for the Society for Cultural Anthropology (a section of the American Anthropological Association).

Associate Professor with Tenure Manduhai Buyandelger gave a series of five invited lectures in June 2019 as a visiting scholar at the Inner Mongolia University, in China.

Professor Stefan Helmreich was on leave for the 2018–2019 year. While holding a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, he was also in residence as the Katherine Hampson Bessell Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

Associate Professor with Tenure Graham Jones was named a MacVicar Faculty Fellow in recognition of his excellence in undergraduate teaching, and he organized a two-day retreat to launch a new Boston-area linguistic anthropology research network.

Associate Professor Moran-Thomas was awarded the 2019 Belize Diabetes Foot Care Group Appreciation Award in recognition of her “outstanding Anthropological Research ... and efforts to improve the overall health of the Belizean people.”

Professor Susan Silbey served as the MIT Faculty Chair, an appointment that ended on July 1, 2019. She was awarded the 2019–2020 James R. Killian, Jr. Faculty Achievement Award, which is the highest honor the Institute faculty bestow on one of its members. The French journal, *Droit et Société*, devoted a special issue to scholarly engagement with, and translation of, Silbey’s essays on work.

Professor Christine Walley's documentary film, *Exit Zero: An Industrial Family Story*, was aired on Chicago's PBS station WTTW, on Labor Day. Throughout the year she continued her work as Project Director on an NEH-funded grant to develop an online archive and storytelling site exploring the impact of deindustrialization on Chicago's neighborhoods.

Anthropology received internal and external funding for a number of new initiatives and projects. Graham Jones received Provostial funds to hire a two-year linguistic anthropology postdoctoral associate and to host a linguistic anthropology event series. Professor Paxson received funding from the MIT-SenseTime Alliance to develop *Relata*, a critical digital tool for scholarly search and discovery. Professor Helmreich's graduate student, Luísa Reis Castro, received an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant for her ethnographic work on biologically modified mosquitoes in Brazil. Professor Christine Walley's graduate student advisee, Elena Sobrino received a Wenner-Gren dissertation research grant as did Professor Graham Jones' graduate student advisee, Jamie Wong.

In 2018–2019, Anthropology once again hosted several visitors. Aalyia Feroz Ali Sadruddin came to the program from Yale University as a 2018–2019 Mellon Pre-Doctoral Diversity Fellow and was supervised by Heather Paxson. Marcelo de Castro Cunha Filho joined the program as a visiting student from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, supervised by Susan Silbey. Adrienne Mannov joined the program as a visiting scholar from Aalborg University in Denmark, and Tanya Cassidy joined the program as a visiting scholar from Maynooth University in Ireland.

Teaching and Curriculum

Manduhai Buyandelger taught 21A.01 How Culture Works, a core subject for the program, in fall 2018 as well as 21A.802 Seminar in Ethnography and Fieldwork, a required CI-M subject for anthropology majors. In spring 2019 she taught 21G.048[J] Images of Asian Women: Dragon Ladies and Lotus Blossoms. Stefan Helmreich was on leave. Graham Jones taught 21A.00 Introduction to Anthropology and co-taught 21A.157 The Meaning of Life with Heather Paxson, both in spring 2019. Amy Moran-Thomas taught 21A.301 Disease and Health: Culture, Society and Ethics and 21A.500[J] Technology and Culture in fall 2018, she offered a new subject, 21A.311 The Social Lives of Medical Objects in spring 2019. The new subject, an upper-level seminar to help students understand “equitable design,” was offered in collaboration with Jose Gomez-Marcus of MIT's Little Devices Lab. Heather Paxson taught the graduate seminar 21A.501[J] Art, Craft, Science in fall 2018 and co-taught 21A.157 The Meaning of Life with Jones in spring. Susan Silbey had teaching relief while she fulfilled her duties as chair of the faculty. Chris Walley taught CI-H subject 21A.461 What is Capitalism? in fall 2018 and CI-H subject 21A.559 DV Lab: Documenting Science through Video and New Media, in spring 2019, along with a graduate seminar on 21A.429[J] Environmental Conflict.

This year the Anthropology Program hired three lecturers to augment the program's undergraduate offerings. Lauren Bonilla taught 21A.400 The Stakes of International Development in fall 2018, Xenia Cherkaev offered 1A.506 The Anthropology of Politics in spring 2019, and Grace Kim offered 21A.509[J] Art, Craft, Science in spring 2019. Buyandelger was the faculty mentor for Lauren Bonilla and Xenia Cherkaev, and Paxson was the faculty mentor for Kim.

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 in PhD programs in the Sloan School of Management, the Department of Urban Studies (DUSP) and the Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT), continues to be well in evidence with faculty members serving as graduate student advisors and on dissertation committees. Buyandelger served on four dissertation committees (all were outside MIT, with one each at University of California (UC), Santa Cruz; Auckland University of Technology; Harvard University; and the Max-Planck Institute; she is principal advisor for one). She also was advisor to one 21E major. Helmreich served on 20 doctoral committees (five as principal advisor; five of his total were outside MIT [one at New School University, one at McGill University, one at Harvard University, and two at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution]). Jones served on six dissertation committees (three as principal advisor; two of his total were outside MIT [one at UCLA, and one at Harvard University]) and was advisor to one 21E major, as well as a first-year advisor. Moran-Thomas served on three dissertation committees and was co-advisor to an undergraduate double major and one major. Paxson served on eight dissertation committees (two as principal advisor; two of her total are outside MIT [one from UC Santa Cruz and Aarhus University, one from Harvard University]). Paxson mentored one of MIT's diversity predocs, supervised two undergraduates working on Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) projects, and was a first-year advisor. Silbey served on eight dissertation committees (four as principal advisor), and Walley served on eight dissertation committees (two as principal advisor; one of her total was outside MIT [at Harvard] University). Walley was also advisor to one 21E major and supervised two undergraduate UROPs.

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 research article, "Asocial memories, 'poisonous knowledge', and haunting in Mongolia," in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

Helmreich published two peer reviewed journal articles, "Massive Movie Waves and the Anthropic Ocean" in *Social Science Information*, and "Science/Art/Culture Through an Ocean Lens" (with Caroline Jones) in *Annual Review of Anthropology*. He published "Music for Cochlear Implants" in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*, edited by Emily Dolan and Alex Rehding; an expanded Portuguese translation of "A Wave of Mud: The Travel of Toxic Water from Bento Rodrigues to the Brazilian Atlantic" (with Eliana Santos Junqueira) was published in the edited volume, *Vidas de Rio e de Mar: Pesca, Desenvolvimento e Ambientação*. He also wrote commentaries for *BOMB* and *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*.

Jones published a journal article, "Indigenous Illusionism and the Global Magic System," in *Early Popular Visual Culture*, and the essay "Abduction as Abduction" as a blog post on the SSRC website, *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere*.

Moran-Thomas saw into production her book, *Traveling with Sugar: Chronicles of a Global Epidemic*, to be published by the University of California Press in October 2019. She published a journal article, "Struggles for Maintenance: Patient Activism and Dialysis Dilemmas amidst a Global Diabetes Epidemic," in *Global Public Health*.

Paxson published “The Naturalization of Nature as Working” as part of a Theorizing the Contemporary series on *The Nature of Work in Fieldsights*, the Society for Cultural Anthropology website. Her edited volume, *Eating Besides Ourselves*, went out for review with Duke University Press.

Silbey published four articles and one book chapter. “I’m not a Feminist but: Hegemony of a Meritocratic Ideology and the Limits of Critique Among Women in Engineering” appeared in *Work and Occupations*; “From Nudge to Culture and Back Again: Coalface Governance in the Regulated Organization” appeared in the *Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences*; “Studying Legal Consciousness: Building Theory from Micro Data” and “After Legal Consciousness” both appeared in *Droit et Société*. A book chapter, “Legal Culture and Cultures of Legality,” was published in the second edition of *Handbook of Cultural Society*. In addition, Silbey wrote 5 articles for the MIT Faculty Newsletter.

Walley wrote a book review of Sherry Linkon’s “The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Writing about Economic Restructuring” for the *Journal of Working Class Studies*.

Presentations

Buyandelger, in addition to the five lectures presented in June at Inner Mongolia University at the invitation of the School of Social Anthropology and the School of Mongol Studies, gave the keynote lecture, “Parliaments, Elections, and Post-socialism,” at the workshop, “Political Transformation in Europe and Asia: Political Representation in Russia, China, Mongolia, and Ukraine in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries” at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in February 2019. She also keynoted the 19th Annual Symposium of the Postsocialist Cultural Studies Network (SOYUZ), at the University of Pittsburg, with the lecture, “Self-Polishing and Electoral Selves: Elections and The New Economies of Democratization in Postsocialist Mongolia.” She gave an invited talk at Harvard University in December 2018 on “An Experience of Being Someone Else.” She presented a paper on “Spirits” at the Annual American Anthropological Association Meeting held in San Jose, CA in November.

Helmreich gave several presentations this year. He gave a talk at Princeton University on “Reading Waves” in November and a one entitled “Wave Count” at Rice University in March. Also in March, he presented “Flipping the Ship” at a weeklong symposium on “Elements: Matters, Analytics, and Worlds” at the Humanities Research Institute of the University of California, Irvine. In June 2019, he presented “Significant Waves: An Anthropologist Examines the History and Culture of Wave Science” at Scripps Institute of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego. Helmreich gave a talk, “Reading a Wave Buoy,” at the meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science in Sydney, Australia in August. At the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in San Jose in November he presented “The Sideways Ship” as part of the panel on “Wonder,” was a panelist for the roundtable on “The War on Science: Anthropology and the Crisis of Expertise,” and gave a discussant commentary on the panel, “Touching from a Distance.”

Jones presented four colloquium talks: “Ethnography and Historiography in French Studies” at the Institute of French Studies, New York University; “Co-Constructing Embodiment in Avant-Garde Québécois Circus” presented at New York University and

Princeton University; and “Indigenous Illusionism and the Global Magic System” at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Moran-Thomas presented a lecture on “Planetary Health and Shifting Ecologies of Nutrition in Coastal Belize” at the Belize Institute for Social and Cultural Research Annual Research Conference in Belmopan, Belize, in April 2019. In September 2018, she presented the paper, “Transatlantic Sugar: Reflections on Para-Communicable Conditions,” at a conference on “Africa and the Epidemiological Imagination: A Critical History of Epidemiological Transition,” at University College London. She gave two papers at the Annual American Anthropological Association Meeting in San Jose, CA in November. “Immunity: Afterlives of Medical Experimentation in Guatemala” was part of the panel on “Insurgent Archives: On the Unwritten, the Storied, and the Sentient,” and the other paper was presented as part of an Executive Session Moran-Thomas co-organized with Elizabeth Roberts, “Communicability in Crisis: A Four-Field Dialogue.”

Paxson gave the keynote lecture, “Rethinking Food and its Eaters,” at the symposium on *Food(ing)* at Aarhus University in Denmark in January 2019, and in February she kicked off the symposium on Opening Access at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada with the lecture, “Beyond the Bespoke: Sustaining Open Access at *Cultural Anthropology*.” She gave a colloquium in August 2018 at Australian National University on “The Cultural Life of Cheese: Gender, Labor and Microbes in American Craft,” and she presented the paper, “Sensing Food Safety at the Border,” at the meetings of the Society for Social Studies of Science in Sydney, Australia that same month.

Silbey gave a talk at the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Science, Technology and the Law in October entitled “Institutional Frameworks for Block Chain and Cyber Currencies.” She gave two talks at Emlyon Business School in France in November, “Narrating Social Structure: Stories of Resistance to Legal Authority” and “The Common Place of Law: How to Build Theory from Qualitative Data.”

Walley gave a keynote lecture, “Haunted Brownfields: An Ethnographer’s Perspective on the Past and Future of Work,” at the conference *History in the Making* at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada in March 2019. During that same visit, she also led a workshop on “Relating Autoethnography and Oral History.” In August, Walley spoke at a panel discussion with community leaders after the public presentation and screening of the *Exit Zero* documentary at the Chicago Cultural Center, sponsored by PBS-WTTW in anticipation of the film broadcast. She gave a lecture on “The Exit Zero Project: A Multimedia Exploration of Family and Class in Chicago” at the University of Chicago in November.

Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology faculty members served on a wide range of committees and task forces at MIT. Buyandelger continued to serve on the SHASS Faculty Diversity Committee and on the MIT Faculty Newsletter Editorial Board, and she represented the Anthropology Program on the MIT Computational Cultures Initiative events committee. She served as the anthropology minor advisor for the academic year and on the Anthropology Program curriculum committee. Helmreich was on leave. Jones was the Anthropology Program representative for the HASTS Program Seminar in the fall, and served on the Anthropology Program curriculum committee and the HASTS graduate admissions

committee. He served on the following MIT committees: Institute Committee on Student Life, Digital Humanities Steering Committee, MIT Museum Collections Committee, and the Computational Cultures Concentration Committee. Moran-Thomas was the SHASS representative on the MIT Climate Action Advisory Committee. She served as the undergraduate officer for Anthropology Program and was the Anthropology representative for the HASTS Program Seminar in the spring. Paxson, in addition to serving as interim head and on the HASTS steering committee, also served on the Anthropology Program curriculum committee. At the Institute level, she continued her service on the Commencement Committee. Silbey served as chair of the MIT Faculty and gave remarks at the opening celebration of the Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing. Walley served as concentration advisor for anthropology and on the HASTS graduate admissions committee. She also maintained her involvement with MIT's First Generation Program and was a member of MIT's Taskforce on Work of the Future.

Outside MIT, Buyandelger served as an article reviewer for *Cultural Anthropology*, *Ethnography*, *Ethos*, and *Mongolian Studies*. She served as well on the selection committee for the 2019 Clifford Geertz Book Prize in The Anthropology of Religion, awarded by the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, a section of the American Anthropological Association. Helmreich served on the editorial board of *Cultural Anthropology*. He was an article referee for *Art History*, *Catalyst*, and *Environmental Humanities*, as well as a manuscript reviewer for Duke University Press and University of Washington Press. Jones served on the editorial board of *Ateliers d'Anthropologie*. He was a manuscript reviewer for Bloomsbury and University of Chicago Press, and an article reviewer for *American Anthropologist*, *Current Anthropology*, *Ethnos*, *History and Anthropology*, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Journal of Urban Technology*, and *Qualitative Sociology*. He also was a reviewer for NSF Senior Grants in Cultural Anthropology. Moran-Thomas was a co-organizer for the Harvard-MIT Friday Morning Seminar in Culture, Psychiatry, and Global Mental Health. She was a member of the Contemporary Latin American Anthropology Workshop and joined the editorial board of *Current Anthropology*. She reviewed articles for *Cultural Anthropology* and *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. Paxson served as co-editor of *Cultural Anthropology*, on the editorial boards of *Gastronomica* and *Engaging Science, Technology and Society*, and on the advisory board of The Cheese of Choice Coalition. She reviewed articles for *Journal for the Anthropology of North America* and *Ethnobiology Letters*, as well as fellowship proposals for the Radcliffe Institute. Silbey continued 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 was also special editor for *Work and Occupations*. She is on the executive committee and board of trustees to the Law & Society Association and on the Committee on Science, Technology and Law of the National Academy of Sciences. Walley was a board member of the Working Class Studies Association and a board member for the Society of Visual Anthropology. She was an advisory committee member of the New England Historical Project at New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. She reviewed a manuscript for Duke University Press and an article for *American Ethnologist*.

Heather Paxson

Section Head

William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Anthropology