

Anthropology

The MIT Program in Anthropology is dedicated to advanced research and publication in cultural anthropology; to undergraduate teaching that introduces students to the fundamentals of cross-cultural understanding and social thought; and to graduate teaching in the history and anthropology of science and technology. Our undergraduate subjects cover a wide range, with special strengths in the study of the contemporary world and the social context of technology. The Anthropology faculty maintains strong ties with other programs in the School of Engineering and the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (SHASS), including Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, Comparative Media Studies, the History faculty, and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society. The Anthropology Program is one of three academic units participating in the History, Anthropology, and Science and Technology doctoral program (HASTS).

Personnel and Administrative Changes

Professor Jean Jackson served as head of the Anthropology Program. Rosemary Hegg continued as administrative officer, and Amberly Steward came on board as administrative assistant. Erica James began her appointment as assistant professor. Associate professors Christine Walley and Stefan Helmreich were on leave during spring term.

Contributions to MIT and Outside Communities

Anthropology Program faculty members served on various committees, boards, and task forces at MIT, including the Women's Studies Steering and Program Committees; the Advisory Board for the Program in Human Rights and Justice; the Editorial Board of the MIT Faculty Newsletter; the Curriculum Committee for Comparative Media Studies (CMS); the Admissions, Curriculum, and Steering Committees of the HASTS doctoral program; the Steering Committee of the Technology and Culture Forum; the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects; and the Equal Opportunity Committee of SHASS. Professor Susan Silbey was appointed to a committee to assess the work of the Engineering Systems Division. The extended Anthropology Program community enthusiastically participated in monthly lunch meetings, instituted last fall, during which one of us presented research in progress.

Outside MIT, Susan Slyomovics, the McMillan-Stewart professor of the study of women in the developing world, served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* and on the editorial committee of *MERIP: Middle East Report*. Professor Jackson served on the advisory boards of the *Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Ethnic Studies* and *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*. Professors Jackson and James Howe both served on the Program Council and board of directors of the organization Cultural Survival. Professor Howe, who is a trustee of the Pilgrim Hall Museum (Plymouth, Massachusetts), also served on the board of the Center for the Preservation of Native Lands. Professor James is on the advisory board for the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Boston. Professor Michael Fischer served on the executive board of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, the editorial board of *Cultural*

Politics, and the Working Group on Middle East Environmental Futures. Professor Silbey served on the publications committee of the Law & Society Association, the editorial board of *Cambridge Studies in Law and Society*, and the council of the Science, Knowledge and Technology Section of the American Sociological Association. Associate professor Hugh Gusterson served as treasurer of the American Ethnological Society and on the editorial board of *Anthropological Quarterly*.

Educational Activities

Anthropology classes continued to be popular among undergraduates. Three were enrolled as majors. Eight students in the class of 2005 completed HASS concentrations in anthropology, and one student completed a minor in anthropology.

Course 21A (Anthropology) introduced three new subjects during AY2005: Professor James's 21A.216J Dilemmas in Bio-Medical Ethics: Playing God or Doing Good?; 21A.225J Violence, Human Rights and Justice; and 21A.460J Medicine, Religion and Politics in Africa and the African Diaspora.

Professors Gusterson, Helmreich, Silbey, Fischer, and Walley served on HASTS graduate student committees. Professor Gusterson was HASTS director of graduate studies, as well as serving on a CMS master's committee. Professor Silbey also served on four Sloan School of Management graduate student committees. Professor Jackson served as anthropologist guide for a group of MIT alumnae on a trip to Tanzania that focused on women's groups.

An additional 11 classes were published in OpenCourseWare for the first time in AY2005: 21A.100 Introduction to Anthropology; 21A.212 Myth, Ritual, and Symbolism; 21A.225J Violence, Human Rights and Justice; 21A.230J The Contemporary American Family; 21A.240 Race and Science; 21A.336 Marketing, Microchips and McDonalds: Debating Globalization; 21A.337J Documenting Culture; 21A.342 Environmental Struggles; 21A.350J The Anthropology of Computing; 21A.441 The Conquest of America; 21A.750J Social Theory and Analysis. Class 21A.337J is both undergraduate and graduate, 21A.750J is graduate, and the rest are undergraduate subjects.

Professors Silbey, Fischer, Jackson, Walley, Helmreich, and Gusterson all play active roles in teaching, advising, and administration of the HASTS doctoral program. Professor Silbey continued to teach the Writing Workshop for HASTS graduate students during the spring.

Presentations

The presentations given by Anthropology Program faculty members during AY2005 provide a sense of the wide range of research interests among program faculty and the diverse fora in which they made presentations during the past year.

Professor Walley presented two papers: "Of Reefs and Ruin: Struggles over Nature and Development in Tanzania's Mafia Island Marine Park" at McGill; and "The NGO-ification of Transnational Feminism" at Columbia.

Professor Jackson ran a workshop at a Stanford conference on “Anthropology of the State and the State of Anthropology” and gave a paper, “Rights to Indigenous Culture in Colombia,” at an MIT–sponsored conference on “Transnationalism and the New Legal Order: Tracking Rights between the Global and the Local” in Chatham, MA.

Professor Howe gave a paper at the Latin American Studies Association meetings on “Kuna Separatism as seen by North Americans and Official Panama, 1900–1995.” The presentation in Panama of his book, *Un pueblo que no se arrodillaba: Panamá, los Estados Unidos, y los kunas de San Blas* (translation of *A People Who Would Not Kneel: Panama, the United States, and the San Blas Kuna*), occasioned several ceremonies and TV and newspaper interviews.

Professor Gusterson spoke on “The NPT, Nuclear Orientalism, and American Hegemony”; “War on Fox”; “The Second Nuclear Age”; “The Truth about Polygraphs;” “Post-Soviet–US Partnerships: Local Contexts and Global Security;” “An Anthropologist and the NIF;” “Mr. Powell Goes to the UN”; and “The Rhetoric of Proof in the War on Terror.”

Professor Fischer gave papers on “Media and the Public Sphere”; “Emergent Forms of Life” and “Mute Dreams and Iranian Cinema”; “Changing Palestine-Israel Ecologies: Narratives of Water, Land, Conflict, and Political Economy, Then, Now and Life to Come”; “Exchange Rates/Rates of Conversion: Biomedicine, Data Banks, and Emergent Forms of Life”; “Post-National Citizenship”; “Transgenic Quebec and Postgenomic Humanism”; “The Anthropology of Science, Technology and Society”; “Iran as a Continuing Model for Social Theory”; “Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice”; and “Public Ethnography.”

Professor Slyomovics spoke on “The Argument from Silence: Morocco’s Truth Commission and Women Political Prisoners” (at UCLA and in Rabat, Morocco); “Scheherazade of Morocco”; and “Translating the Maghreb.”

Professor Helmreich presented papers on “Outline of a Theory of Fieldwork” and “Microcosmic Seas: a Maritime Anthropology of Marine Microbiological Worlds” (in Reykjavik, Iceland); “The Signature of Life: Designing the Astrobiological Imagination”; “Doubling Back to Artificial Life”; and “The Microbially Modified Ocean.”

Professor James spoke on “Déjà Vu All Over Again: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Rape in Haiti.”

Lecturer Heather Paxson gave talks on “Women as Symbols or Agents of the Nation? The Paradoxical Politics of Pronatalism and Family Planning in Greece”; and “Cheese Cultures, or Camembert Meets French DNA.”

Publications

Professor Slyomovics published *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (Pennsylvania).

Professor Jackson published “How to Narrate Chronic Pain? The Politics of Representation”; “Colombia’s Indigenous Peoples Confront the Armed Conflict”; and a review article, “Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Movements in Latin America and the World.”

Professor Gusterson published *People of the Bomb: Portraits of America’s Nuclear Complex* (Minnesota) and coedited *Why America’s Top Pundits Are Wrong* (California). He also published “A Pedagogy of Diminishing Returns: Scientific Involution across Three Generations of Nuclear Weapons Science”; “The Weakest Link? Academic Dissent in the War on Terrorism”; “The Seven Deadly Sins of Samuel Huntington”; and several smaller pieces.

Professor Walley published “Best Intentions: the Story of Tanzania’s People Park.”

Professor Helmreich published “How Scientists Think: About ‘Natives,’ for Example: A Problem of Taxonomy among Biologists of Alien Species in Hawaii”; “The Word for World is Computer: Simulating Second Natures in Artificial Life”; “El espacio de la ciencia, del genoma humano al océano”; and “Sex on the Brain: A Natural History of Rape and the Dubious Doctrines of Evolutionary Psychology” (coauthored with Dr. Paxson). Professor Fischer’s *Mute Dreams, Blind Owls & Dispersed Knowledges: Persian Poesis in the Transnational Circuitry* (Duke) appeared in August. He also published “Technoscientific Infrastructures and Emergent Forms of Life: A Commentary”; “Biosciences and Biotechnologies as Deep Play and Ethical Plateaus”; “Deep Play, Violence, and Social Reconstruction”; “Changing Ecologies: Narratives of Water, Land, Conflict, and Political Economy, Then and Now, and Life to Come”; “Persian Miniatures: I. Bahs (Debate) in Qum; II. Simulation in Tehran”; “The Research Object and the Objectivity of the Researcher”; and coauthored an “Introduction” for a special journal issue on the Middle East.

Professor Silbey coauthored “Profession, Science, and Culture: An Emergent Canon of Law and Society Research” and “Defending the Liberal Arts from Law.” She also published “The Dream of a Social Science: Supreme Court Forecasting, Legal Culture and the Public Sphere”; “Everyday Life and the Constitution of Legality”; “Designing Qualitative Research”; and “Going Where Theory Leads.”

Dr. Paxson published one journal article, “Slow Food in a Fat Society: Satisfying Ethical Appetites,” and three book chapters: “Family Planning, Human Nature, and the Ethical Subject of Sex in Greece”; “Underfertility’s Challenge to Family and Gender Relations in Urban Greece”; and “Sex on the Brain: A Natural History of Rape and the Dubious Doctrines of Evolutionary Psychology” (coauthored with Professor Helmreich).

Grants, Honors, Awards

Professor Slyomovics and Dr. Paxson were awarded Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation Fellowship grants. A journal article published in 2003 by Professor Silbey was awarded a prize for the best article in sociology of culture and best article in political sociology.

Jean Jackson

Program Head

Professor of Anthropology

More information about the Anthropology Program can be found online at <http://web.mit.edu/anthropology/>.