

Greetings from the Head of Sociology: Malcolm Holmes



The past year has once again been very busy and productive for the Department. In the fall, I filled in as Department Head for Donna Barnes during her sabbatical leave, which followed the publication of her latest book. Her research is featured in the faculty highlights below. One thing that stands out from my experience as Head is learning so much more about the many accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni. I am truly impressed!

Once again our students excelled in academics and in service to the community. Two Sociology graduates, Amy Rieser and Chris Holmes, received the highest honors the University of Wyoming and the College of Arts & Sciences bestow on those receiving undergraduate degrees. Other sociology students availed themselves of opportunities to study abroad. Ana McCormick and Megan Norton studied in China and Great Britain, respectively. The Great Britain trip was made possible by a new collaboration of the University of Wyoming with several other universities.

Following tradition, the Department again hosted the spring banquet to socialize with and honor our graduating students. This year's event was noteworthy for the unusually large number of graduate students being recognized for completing their M.A. degrees. During the past year, eight graduate students earned their degrees. The banquet allowed us to recognize the many achievements of our students, and the excellent meal and companionship were greatly enjoyed by all who attended.

I wish to thank the department's many alumni and friends, as well as the faculty, staff, and students who have supported the Department in so many ways. I am particularly appreciative of the generous donations made to the Chet Meeks Fund, which is now on the verge of receiving matching funds from the State of Wyoming. I am optimistic that this goal will be realized very soon, which will provide a \$100,000.00 fund to support graduate student summer research projects for many years to come. The past recipients of Meeks Fund awards have benefitted greatly from their summer funding, and we look forward to augmenting the number and amount of future awards as the state match is achieved.

Best regards,
Malcolm Holmes

Faculty Highlights



The past year was particularly momentous for **Professor Donna Barnes**. Her accomplishments in research, teaching, and service were recognized by promotion to Full Professor, the highest faculty rank. The path to this final promotion is long and arduous. Above all, one must produce a distinguished record of scholarship. The Sociology Department is justly proud of the many research accomplishments, as well as the stellar teaching record and service contributions, which culminated in her promotion.

Dr. Barnes' promotion came as her latest book, *The Louisiana Populist Movement: 1881-1900*, was wending its way through the publication process at the Louisiana State University Press. This book builds on her previous work on *Farmers in Rebellion*. (continued on page 2)

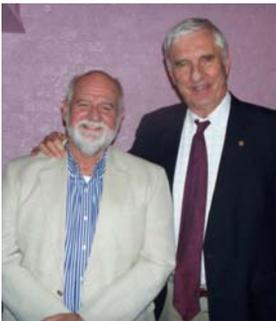
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Faculty Highlights (continued)

(continued from page 1) In her new endeavor, she relied extensively on archival records to examine the Southern Farmer's Alliance, the Populists, or People's Party, that garnered the support of millions of rural southerners. Endeavoring to explain the movement's atypical poor record of mobilization in Louisiana, she contends that most scholars focus on the emergence and rise of successful social movements but overlook the valuable observations to be gleaned by analyzing less successful ones such as Louisiana Populism. She concludes that racial division undermined the Populist cause in Louisiana. The Democratic Party saw the movement's agenda as a threat to white supremacy, which in conjunction with the 1898 state constitution that disenfranchised poor rural whites and most blacks, predestined the People's Party to poor public reception that impeded social movement growth. Racial threat, combined with Louisiana's unique agricultural industry, doomed the movement to failure.

During her sabbatical, Dr. Barnes focused on two different research projects: one concerned the Heart Mountain Japanese Internment Camp in Wyoming during WWII, the other the United Farm Workers (UFW) Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These endeavors promise to yield new insights into the dynamics of social movements.



Professor Richard Machalek was recognized as the College of Arts and Sciences Exemplary Faculty Award winner for 2011. Dean Walter described him as “a role model whom newer faculty should emulate.” Since coming to UW in 1988, Dr. Machalek has contributed extensively to the teaching, research, and service missions of the University. His impressive record of accomplishments includes teaching a wide variety of courses, ranging from Principles of Sociology to graduate seminars on topics such as Social Theory and Evolutionary Sociology. His past honors include a John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award. Dr. Machalek is a prominent scholar in the emerging area of evolutionary sociology and has published some 20 articles and chapters during his time at UW. His service contributions include stints as the Head of Sociology and Interim Dean of the Libraries, as well as membership on many important committees.



On the other end of the career spectrum, our assistant professors are off to auspicious starts to promising academic careers. **Dr. Matthew Painter** is the newest addition to the Sociology faculty. His interests span several areas, including immigration, cohabitation, and social capital. Among his publications this year was an article in *Demography*, which ranks among the most prestigious journals in sociology. That study extends research on the relationship between the accumulation of wealth and union experiences, such as marriage and cohabitation. Interestingly, this article reports that individuals who marry their one and only cohabiting partner experience a wealth premium that is twice as large as that for married individuals who never cohabited prior to marrying. Apart from his research endeavors, Dr. Painter is UW's coordinator of the British Studies Program, which comprises a consortium of several universities.



Our other assistant professor, **Dr. Anna Zajacova**, is primarily concerned with the social factors implicated in the causes and consequences of health and illness. She is currently the principal investigator on a large grant from the National Cancer Institute, which focuses on economic consequences accruing to cancer survivors and their families. She also published several articles this year. A recent study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* demonstrates that a commonly used measure of self-reported health has questionable reliability across socioeconomic categories, an observation that calls into question many reported findings. Such work has tremendous potential for redirecting measurement approaches across the entire field of social epidemiology and providing more reliable research findings. Dr. Zajacova's research was recognized with a 2011 College of Arts & Sciences Extraordinary Merit in Research Award, a rare accomplishment for someone so early in the academic career.

Staff News



This year marked Senior Office Associate **Elaine Force**'s fifteenth anniversary in the Sociology Department. Her knowledge of the University and consummate administrative skills make her an invaluable asset to our faculty and students. During the fall her contributions to our students were recognized by the College of Arts & Sciences Student Council, who presented her with the Outstanding Student Service award. The Sociology Department is fortunate indeed to have someone of Elaine's ability and compassion working with us!

Student News



Ana McCormick participated in Dr. Yarong Ashley's course, *Shanghai: Past and Present*, which was taught in China. She describes her trip as the experience of a lifetime:

I had no background in Chinese or Chinese culture, apart from the Chinese Society course I was taking from Dr. Ashley at the time, so this course was truly a life-changing adventure. The trip began in Shanghai where we joined students at Shanghai University in a class on Sino-American relations. The course was taught by Dr. Jean Garrison of the University of Wyoming International Studies Department. We had many adventures during our time in Shanghai: We began with a tour of the Shanghai University campus with SU students and eventually branched out to experience the rest of the city. We explored downtown Shanghai, touring areas such as The Bund and The French Concession. We visited numerous museums including the Urban Planning Museum and the Shanghai Museum. During our time in Shanghai, we also took a day trip to visit a nearby water village. For the next segment of our trip, we took an overnight train to the city of Xi'an where we visited the Xi'an Muslim Quarter, the city's Bell Tower and Great Mosque, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, and walked a section of the Xi'an city wall. The highlight of our time in Xi'an, though, was our visit to see the Terra Cotta Warriors. The next leg of the trip was to Beijing where we toured the Forbidden City, the Ming Tombs, numerous temples and, best of all, the Great Wall of China. The final leg of our journey took us back to Shanghai where we went on an excursion of Chongming Island, just outside Shanghai and a visit to the Shanghai Circus City, an acrobatic show. The trip only increased my interest in China and Chinese culture; a study abroad experience should be a part of everyone's undergraduate education.



Megan Norton participated in the British Studies program and provides the following account of her experience (Megan is on the right in the photo of UW students taken at Stonehenge):

I had a great experience with the British Studies program this last summer. This was the first time that I had traveled abroad and by going with this program I had a lot of opportunities that I would not have had on my own, and I also met a lot of people that I would not have met otherwise. The course was interesting and covered a variety of topics, so every day ended up being different from the last. It was also really nice to not always be in a classroom, the course was mostly made up of guest speakers and field trips. The best part of the class was that the topics varied quite a bit, so if you didn't like one guest speaker or field trip, the next day would be something totally different. One of the field trips was a visit to Wimbledon. This was something that I had not really been looking forward to but then it ended up being one of my favorite things that we did that month. Even though class and homework were priorities there was still plenty of time to do whatever you wanted on the weekends. My friends and I went on day trips around England, spent the mini-break in Scotland and even went to Paris for a day.

Undergraduate Student Awards



Amy Rieser, who graduated with a B.S. in sociology, environment and natural resources, and the honors program, minor in statistics, was awarded the **Rosemarie Martha Spitaleri Award** as the University of Wyoming's outstanding graduating woman. In addition to graduating with a 3.8 grade point average, Amy distinguished herself in leadership and citizenship. Highlights of her service include an AmeriCorp position on the ACRES student farm, working with the community, various schools, UW classes, and student organizations. She also worked with the Good Mule Project, which seeks to empower students to initiate action on behalf of the social and environmental good. Amy represented the College of Arts and Sciences as an Associated Students of UW (ASUW) senator. She was a McNair Scholar, a program that encourages underrepresented and first-generation college students to pursue research projects in preparation for graduate education. She continued her research the following summer with an EPSCoR fellowship. Amy is now an assistant research scientist in the Wyoming Survey and Statistical Analysis Center and is pursuing graduate work in environment and natural resources.



Chris Holmes, who graduated with a B.S. in sociology and the honors program and minors in creative writing and statistics, was honored as a College of Arts and Sciences **Top Twenty** graduate. Each of the thirty A&S departments may nominate their best students for this prestigious award, which is based on academic accomplishments and service to the community. Chris graduated with a 4.0 grade point average. Included among his academic honors was induction into Phi Beta Kappa, America's oldest honorary society. Chris' service contributions included working as an AmeriCorp volunteer with the Wyoming Conservation Corp, which entailed a summer of arduously laboring on public works projects throughout the state. He is currently working for the Laramie County School District #1 and is preparing to apply to sociology doctoral programs.



Paul Gallegos and **Chris Holmes** received the **Flittie Scholarships** for undergraduate excellence. The selection for this award is very competitive. Recipients must have completed their junior year and maintained a 3.5 grade point average in their sociology courses. In addition, **Paul** was selected as a finalist for the **Tobin Memorial Award**, which recognizes UW's outstanding graduating man. He graduated with a 3.7 grade point average and an extensive record of service to Oxfam, Habitat for Humanity, and as an ASUW senator representing the College of Arts and Science, and other organizations.

Paul Gallegos and **Amy Rieser** received **Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors Service Awards** last year. These awards are further tribute to their extensive service contributions to UW and the larger community. We applaud their exemplary commitment to helping others!

Graduate Student Awards



Ryan Gunderson was the 2011 recipient of the **Chet Meeks Summer Research Award**. This endowment was created to honor Chet Meeks, who was an undergraduate major in our department in the 1990s. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of New York at Albany, subsequently distinguishing himself as a professor at Northern Illinois University and Georgia State University. When Chet learned early in his career that he had incurable cancer, the idea of the memorial fund was born. It provides for a competitively awarded stipend to support summer research by a graduate student. Ryan's project involved a critical analysis of livestock agribusiness that resulted in several publications. Ryan is now a PhD student at Michigan State University.



Kelly Leichtnam received an award from the **Wilbourne Excellence Fund**. This fund was established by Amy (Johnson) and John Wilbourne. Amy is a Wyoming native who received her B.A and M.A. in Sociology from UW. The fund provides a very flexible and valuable resource for the department, as it may be used for a variety of educational enrichment activities. This year it provided a summer stipend to support Kelly's data collection at the United State Air Force Academy for his study of facial dominance and military promotions.

Graduate Student Research

Ryan Gunderson worked last summer on developing his M.A. thesis project for publication. His research focused on the ways and means meat is produced and distributed, which have changed dramatically over the last half century. In the United States, most animal products now come from large-scale, intensive, mechanized operations, a trend that is likely to take hold across both developed and developing regions of the world. Ryan maintains that one of the main drivers of this transformation is monopoly capitalism's need to accumulate capital. While livestock agribusiness is extremely productive and provides cheaper animal products, it is ecologically unsound, a threat to public health, and at odds with society's general disapproval of livestock mistreatment. Ryan relies on Marx's concept of a "metabolic rift" to analyze each of these contradictions in detail. His research has resulted in the acceptance of several articles for publication, which is a fine start to his pursuit of an academic career.

Kelly Leichtnam spent last summer investigating how people's physical characteristics may influence military promotions. The United States military is an institution that claims promotion through the ranks is based on a meritocracy. Presumably advancement follows a specified path in which individuals must accomplish assigned tasks before promotion becomes possible. However, physical characteristics can affect how an individual is perceived by others, providing for different life experiences and opportunities. These factors may affect the opportunities an individual is afforded during his or her military career, challenging the assumption of a purely meritocratic system. Extending social dominance theory and visibility theory, Kelly's project develops a theoretical framework that incorporates facial dominance to examine the promotion process for military officers. He collected data from cadets at the United States Air Force Academy and students at the University of Wyoming to test facial dominance hypotheses, which he is currently analyzing for his M.A. thesis.

Graduate Student News

Several graduate students received their M.A. degrees during the 2010-2011 academic year. Their names and thesis title are listed below. We wish them the very best in their post-graduate endeavors!

Fall 2010	The Rural-Urban Suicide Differential in a Rapidly Growing Area: The Case of Colorado and Utah	Muneyuki (Shinze) Kato
Fall 2010	Effects of Individual and Community Characteristics on Sentencing: A Test of the Threat Hypothesis	Kristen N. McCord
Spring 2011	Don't Blame it on the Alcohol: College Binge Drinking Predictors Related to Student Life and Campus Involvement	Elizabeth B. Atwood
Spring 2011	The Choice to Stay in Prison: Understanding Wyoming Inmates' Decision to Forgo Parole	Brianna L. Best
Spring 2011	The Metabolic Rifts of Livestock Agribusiness	Ryan Gunderson
Spring 2011	Assessing and Extending Value-Belief-Norm Theory to Predict Environmentally Significant Behaviors	Claire Ingles Fairley Maloney
Spring 2011	Kids and Guns: The Impact of Children and Parenthood on Adult Support for Gun Control	Matthew J. Thompson
Spring 2011	Revocation Rates and the Discretionary Power of Community Sanctions Officers	Jeremy E. Weaver

Alumni News

This year's alumni news section features three of our former students who have recently begun careers as assistant professors of sociology. We are proud of their accomplishments and wish the very best for each of them!



Dr. Eric Bonds worked for several years as a community organizer with Laramie-based Biodiversity Conservation Alliance after graduation from UW with a B.S. in sociology in 2000. He continued his studies in sociology at Minnesota State University and then at the University of Colorado, where he earned his Ph.D. in 2011. Eric now works as an assistant professor at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia, where he does research primarily in the fields of environmental and political sociology. He says that he continues to draw on the inspiration he received as a student at the University of Wyoming in his own teaching today.

Alumni News (continued)



Dr. Lisa Dilks received her B.A. degree in Women's Studies and Sociology from UW before entering the Master's program in 2003. While working on her M.A. thesis, Lisa entered the Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of South Carolina. Although completing a thesis while living 1700 miles away from her committee proved difficult at times, Lisa completed her M.A. degree in 2008 and published an article based on her thesis in *Social Science Research* (co-authored with Shane Thye and her UW advisor, Patsy Taylor). Also in 2008, Lisa earned an M.I.S. degree in statistics from USC, and she completed her Ph.D. in 2010. Lisa began her academic career as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Claflin University, a historically black university in Orangeburg, SC. After working at Claflin for two years, Lisa accepted a tenure-track position at West Virginia University in Morgantown. Lisa presently teaches undergraduate social psychology and a two semester sequence in advanced statistics to students in the sociology M.A. program at WVU.



Dr. Akiko Yoshida became an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 2010. She was born and raised in Japan, never dreaming of becoming a professor or living on foreign soil. Akiko's parents expected her to complete high school, work for a few years, marry, and raise a family. Instead, she went to college in Japan and then came to the United States in 1992 to get her M.A. at the University of Wyoming. More than 10 years after earning her degree in 1995, she realized that she wanted to be a sociology professor. In 2006, Akiko entered the doctoral program at the University of Oklahoma (OU) with this goal in mind. She has succeeded admirably. Akiko received the *2010 Provost's Ph.D. Dissertation Award* at OU. As a second year professor, she is revising her dissertation for publication as a book, working on research projects, and enjoying teaching various courses, including family sociology and research methods.

In closing this year's newsletter, Akiko's observations about her Japanese heritage seem particularly apropos as we begin the new year:

I am a late-bloomer, and I think this is partly due to growing up in Japan, which gave me obstacles (e.g., gender inequality) and advantages (e.g., good health, discipline, and good academic skills). Having lived in Japan and the US., it was easier for me to acquire a *sociological imagination*. Thus, Japan is a big part of who I am now. Many people, including UW sociology faculty, kindly asked me how my family and friends are doing in disaster-struck Japan [which suffers dreadfully in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami]. The sad truth is that they themselves do not know *how* they are doing – the effects of radiation contamination are not immediate and remain uncertain. Nuclear energy is problematic in so many ways. It would be appreciated if everyone thought of this issue as their *own* issue, because indeed it is.

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