Welcome to a New Year

New students; renewing the graduate program; instituting a new Honors program; Department seminars; Public Sociology; research initiatives

We have had a splendid kickoff to the new academic year with the entry of the largest cohort of new students in recent years. They join a new visiting assistant professor, Jennifer Hsu. We have also inaugurated an Honors program, crafted by Fred Deyo, the outgoing Director of Undergraduate Studies. In these difficult budgetary times, we have been fortunate to be able to hire a tenure-track assistant professor in urban sociology for 2011-12.

This inaugural issue of our newsletter is a means to highlight these events and to keep in touch with our alumni—graduate and undergraduate—and to establish and ‘continually reconstruct our community,’ as Terry Hopkins enjoined us to do.

Binghamton continues to be one of the few places to emphasize world-historical studies of large-scale social change and one that encourages independent scholarly development rather than standardized training in established specializations.

With the departure of many of the founders of our internationally recognized graduate program, over the last decade, a number of scholars have joined us to deepen and broaden our strengths in the critical study of political economy, culture, power, and the hierarchies of race, class, and gender.

We have continued to widen our reach through a series of joint appointments, not only with sister departments in Binghamton but also with institutions, near and far. Shelley Feldman—Director of Cornell University’s Feminist, Gender, and Sexualities Studies program—joined us on a half-time basis. We are delighted that Walden Bello has come to Binghamton as an International Adjunct Professor.

With these appointments we continue to reinforce our expertise on world regions that has been one of our traditional strengths and we now have a depth of expertise on world regions that is unparalleled anywhere for a department of our size: on Asia (Bello, Bix, Deyo, Feldman, Hsu, Y Lee, Palat, & Sarkar); Latin America and the Caribbean (Diaz-Cotto, Gates, Jimenez-Munoz, Quijano, Santiago-Valles, Tomich, & West); Africa (Laremont, Martin, & West); Europe/Middle East (Keyder & O’Hearn).
and the US (Feldman and Roth).

This world-wide focus was reinforced by a Harpur College Dean’s Speakers Series on the Global South that included presentations by Sujatha Fernandes (Queen’s College); Anne-Maria Makhulu (Duke University); and Ariel Salzmann (Queen’s University).

Since Fall 2009, we have instituted a departmental seminar series and last year, among our speakers were: Cedric Johnson (Hobart & William Smith Colleges); William Robinson (UC Santa Barbara); and Xiaoxi Tong (China Agricultural University). Tong is also our first Visiting Research Fellow in a new program instituted last Fall.

In our continuing commitment to faculty and student research collaboration, we have launched a new Binghamton Justice project on social justice and the global carceral system which organized a hugely successful conference on “Policing, Incarceration, and Militarization” on April 19, 2010.

We hope to reinforce this tradition of collaborative student-faculty research by launching two additional research initiatives this year: on After US hegemony and governance and resistance in the global South. Other opportunities for collaborative research are available at the Fernand Braudel Center.

These initiatives complement the department’s strengths in political economy (Bello, Deyo, Feldman, Gates, Keyder, Y Lee, Martin, O’Hearn, & Palat) social movements (Feldman, Y Lee, Martin, O’Hearn, Roth, West, & Santiago-Valles); gender (Feldman, Gates, Diaz-Cotto, Jimenez-Munoz, Y Lee, Roth, & Sarkar); nationalism (Quijano, Feldman, & Sarkar); sociology of knowledge (Feldman, R Lee, & Martin); urban sociology (Hsu & Keyder) and the sociology of law (Keyder, & Laremont).

Our graduate students continue their own initiatives by holding the Graduate Student Conference in Historical Sociology, March 26-28, 2010 at which Rod Bush was the keynote speaker.

We also build on our tradition of public sociology--Walden Bello--has been elected to the Philippines’ House of Representatives. He continues his organizational activities against neo-liberalism and maintains a punishing schedule of publications and lectures. At the local level, Herbert Bix, is a leading force in the Broome County Peace Action.

Our teaching continues to win accolades and last year Bill Martin was awarded the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Leslie Gates has been elected President of the Political Economy of the World-Systems (PEWS) section of the American Sociological Association and Gladys Jimenez-Munoz elected President of the Puerto Rican Studies Association. Caglar Keyder was elected to the Turkish Academy of Sciences. Shelley Feldman is the President of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies.

Gates also won the PEWS section’s award for the best article. Benita Roth was selected to be an Associate Editor of the Journal of Women’s History.

Denis O’Hearn, Gates, and Roth won research awards from Harpur College.

On a more sombre note, we also held a celebration of the life of Giovanni Arrighi, friend and mentor to so many of us, and who did so much to enhance and embellish the reputation of our department. As befits his huge impact on us, it was an occasion for so many of our former faculty and students to come together.

Ravi Arvind Palat Chair
Fred Deyo
Stepped down after many years of service, and creating the Honors Program, as Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Juanita Diaz-Cotto
Continues as Director of LACAS.

Leslie Gates
Was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. Her article, “Theorizing Business Power in the Semiperiphery: Mexico 1970-2000,” Theory & Society, 2009 received the Distinguished Article Award from the PEWS section of the ASA. She has also won a fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Binghamton.

Gladys Jimenez-Munoz
Is the new Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Caglar Keyder

Ricardo Rene Laremont
Received a grant of $1.5 million to study the competing ideologies of Sufism and Salafism in North Africa and the Sahel. He also published a chapter in Francis Deng, Self-Determination and National Unity: A Challenge for Africa and an article on “Islamic Law, Muslim-Christian Relations, and the Transition to Democracy in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic,” Journal of the Middle East and Africa, I, 1.

Richard E. Lee

Yoonkyung Lee

William G. Martin
Is the Co-ordinator of the Binghamton Justice Project; Co-ordinator of the Regional Workshop on Militarization, Incarceration, and Surveillance; and the Co-ordinator and Faculty Advisor of the UTURN prison mentoring program of the Black Student Union.

Denis O’Hearn

Ravi Arvind Palat

Anibal Quijano
Was awarded a Doctorate Honoris Causa by the University of Buenos Aires, September 2009.
Faculty Update

Benita Roth
Received a year’s fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Binghamton.

Kelvin Santiago-Valles
Was selected as Chair of “Andres Ramos Mattei-Neveille Hall” article prize selection committee of the Association of Caribbean Historians.

Mahua Sarkar
Was a visiting fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi; and a Visiting Scholar in Residence, Department of Gender Studies, Central European University, Budapest.

Dale Tomich
Co-organized an international conference on “New Frontiers of Slavery and Freedom in the Nineteenth Century” in Rio de Janeiro and Vassouras in Brazil.

Michael West
Was Co-Chair of the 2010 New York African Studies Association meeting and continued as Faculty Advisor to the Malik Fraternity.

Graduate Student Kudos

Utku Balaban
Has been appointed to a one-year teaching position at the Delaware County Community College.

Matthew Birkhold
Is guest-editing a special SOULS issue on James Bogg’s The American Revolution.

Azat Zana Gundogan
Received a Middle East Research Competition Award.

Yu-Ling Huang
Received research grants from the Rockefeller Archive Center and from the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium.

Latoya Lee
Was a Summer Intern at NYU for the Margaret Sanger Papers Project and worked in Volume IV of Sanger’s selected papers titled Around the World for Birth Control, 1920-1966.

Jeff Howison
Jennifer J Y Hsu
Joins us as a Visiting Assistant Professor. She obtained her Ph.D from the University of Cambridge. Her work is on the role of the local Chinese state in the development of the NGO sector and civil society in urban China. She has held positions at the University of Toronto and at York University and was, most recently, a fellow at the University of Sydney. She is currently working on two manuscripts on HIV/Aids and on NGOs in China.

Xiaoxi Tong
Was appointed as our first Visiting Research Fellow in September 2009. Having obtained an MA in Sociology from the University of Iowa and a JD from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, he is an Associate Professor of Sociology at China Agricultural University. His research interests include collective action and social movements; historical sociology, rural-urban space, and sociology of risk.

Jeff Howison
This was a momentous year for Jeff Howison. He defended his dissertation on the post World War II rise of conservative politics in the United States, This is not a Cotton Picker’s Dream: Regions, Race, and Political Change in Post WW II United States. Portions of it will be published in the Journal of Urban History, 2011. He is now an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Yeditepe University in Istanbul. He also married Irmak Ertuna, a graduate student in Comparative Literature at Binghamton. He says he has not “taken off” his PhD hat since he left Binghamton!

Robert Schmidt
Robert Schmidt is now teaching at Wilkes University. His dissertation is titled Revitalization and Its Discontents: The Political and Symbolic Economy of Post-Anthracite Scranton, PA (1945-2010).

Vandana Swami
Over the summer, Vandana Swami defended her dissertation, Wheels of Empire and Reordering of Landscape: The Great Indian Peninsula Railway and Geography in 19th Century Colonial Western India. It examined railroad landscape as a symbol of imperial power, especially after the American Civil War when Britain turned to India for the supply of cotton. She has been appointed as a one-year Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Western Connecticut State University.
**Governance and Resistance in the Global South**

If modernization theories have been discredited as their ahistorical biases have become apparent, conceptions of governance which are equally ahistorical still enjoy wide currency. Normative conceptions of ‘democracy’ being theoretical encapsulations of idealized Euro-North American patterns of socio-historical change continue to shape discussions of political evolution and state formation in the global South. Characteristics of states are compared to a checklist of criteria derived from an ideal-type list and these states are arrayed according to how well they match these purportedly universal criteria. Indeed, it could be asked whether democracy, strong states, and high levels of wealth can be created without colonial exploitation of other peoples. Foreign intervention and colonial domination in the global South not only provided the material underpinnings for core states in the global North, but in the colonized countries themselves, populations were ethnicized and racialized by colonial structures of rule.

Differently put, state-formation in the global South after the Second World War has been a fundamentally different project, since processes like territorial integration, adult suffrage, economic well-being, and provision of welfare that took decades if not centuries in Europe and were sequential were telescoped into a few years and expected to be accomplished simultaneously in conditions of extreme material deprivation, mass illiteracy, and constant intervention by core states. Where formally democratic states—usually meaning the institution of electoral systems and the more or less peaceful transfers of power between political parties—have been established, structures of power, and hence possibilities of resistance, have been very different from the structures normatively associated with ‘democracy’ in reigning literatures. Populations are marginalized in different patterns; familial dynasties are anointed through elections; gender, and status hierarchies distort representational politics. Different histories condition how states experience the impact of wider geopolitical conditions. This research initiative is hence concerned with examining the constitution of ‘democratic’ states in the global South in a world-historical perspective. Ideally, students and faculty will examine case studies within a common theoretical and analytical framework that we will develop together.

**Coordinators: Yoonkyung Lee, Ravi Arvind Palat, and Michael West**
After US Hegemony

The ongoing financial crisis sharply silhouettes Fernand Braudel’s observation that it is a “sign of autumn,” the transition from one world-scale system of accumulation to another. It also underlines the meteoric descent of the United States from being the one “indispensable nation” to a state mired in the morass of war in Iraq and Afghanistan and facing a economy in increasing disarray at home. Building on Braudel’s insight, Giovanni Arrighi had argued each ascendant hegemonic power seeks to cast its particular interest as the general interest of the rulers or the subjects of other powers. In particular, he stressed that each hegemony involved a specific pattern of alliance between the ruling and business elites. In this vein, Stephen Bunker and his collaborators argued that as conveniently located sources of strategic raw materials were exploited first, each ascendant power had to solder innovative structures of finance, transportation, and methods of extracting raw materials leading to new patterns of government-business partnerships.

We are on the threshold of a new hegemonic transition as indicated by the rise of several powers in the global South—most notably, China, India, Brazil, and South Africa. Seeking strategic raw materials, these states are investing heavily in other states within the global South while acquiring technical knowledge and brand-name loyalties by purchasing companies from the North. New patterns of state-enterprise relations are being forged that the Economist magazine called the 21st century equivalent of the northern European trading companies of the 17th century! At the same time, the growth of outsourcing and subcontracting have cut the ground from under organized labor while the implementation of free market policies have undermined the autonomy of peasant societies. And at the same time alliances across the Global South challenge global racial, as well as economic, formations entrenched under Anglo-American cultural hegemony.

This research initiative seeks to locate an analysis of the present conjuncture within a broader historical background in order to examine possible trajectories in the future. Among the broad topics covered by this research initiative are: rise of the global South and the decline of the West; impact of Asian investments in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East; agro-imperialism; new patterns of state-private enterprise relations; the ‘resource curse’; and possibilities of new racial formations and resistance.

Coordinators: William G Martin & Ravi Arvind Palat
Department News
Please let us know your news that can be included in future issues of our newsletter.
We would love to hear from you.

Please also tell us if you would like a PDF version of this newsletter.

Contact us at Sociology@binghamton.edu

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