MU Sociology Welcomes Two New Faculty Members

By John Pruitt

The University of Missouri Department of Sociology welcomed two new members this academic year: Assistant Professor Eileen Bjornstrom and Visiting Assistant Professor Peeter Tammeveski.

The Tools of Success

Eileen Bjornstrom received her doctorate from The Ohio State University in 2009. Her research and teaching interests focus on medical sociology, urban sociology, social control, and research methods. Broadly, she is interested in the ways in which the economic and social characteristics of place are associated with inequality and well-being. Within this framework, Bjornstrom is currently pursuing two lines of inquiry. The first builds from her dissertation and involves the examination of the relationship between neighborhood income inequality, social resources, and health outcomes. She is especially interested in how less-powerful groups may experience context differently and whether this contributes to health disparities. The second line of inquiry investigates the ways that the characteristics of the local built environment, such as land use, commercial diversity, and commercial decline are associated with residents’ health, with a focus on propensity for obesity. She also is involved in a collaborative project that examines the ways perpetrators and victims are portrayed in television crime news and how the context of the news story and the media market influence portrayals across race and ethnicity.

While research is important to her, providing students with the tools they need to succeed is equally salient. “I care about students, and I want them to enjoy their time in the classroom. I want students to think critically about how classroom knowledge might help them move forward. In general, I want them to know that I am willing to go above and beyond [the call of duty] to help them succeed.”

As Bjornstrom provides the tools of success for her students, MU and the Department of Sociology are providing the tools for her own success. “There is good structure and balance for strong research. The expectation for strong research is there, but I get the support I need to accomplish it. It’s really nice to be in a place where teaching and research are both valued.”

For Bjornstrom, “going above and beyond” is the foundation for everyone’s success.

MU Sociology Provides the Right Fit for Tammeveski

Peeter Tammeveski is a new member of the department on a two-year appointment as visiting assistant professor. He received his master’s degree and doctorate...
Faculty Kudos


Wayne Brekhus received the 2009 MU Excellence in Advising Award this past spring, and the 2009 Statewide Outstanding Advisor Award from the Missouri Academic Advising Association this fall.

David Brunsma became co-editor of Societas Without Borders: Human Rights and the Social Sciences. He edited The Social Uniform Manual. Key Documents with Carmit Scicchitano. He was the author of an article in Teaching Sociology, and he wrote an article with Kerry Anne Ki in the American Association of University Professors. She also presented "Neighbor- hood Income Inequality and Obesity: Evidence of Effects Across Race-ethnicity at the annual meetings of the Southern Sociological Society in New Orleans, and was a panelist for another session at the same conference.

John Galliker received the 2009 Lee Founder's Award for the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Jaber F. Gubrium published a book chapter in Ethnicities Revisted: Constructing Ethnicity in the Field, edited by Anthony J. Puddpeatt, William Shaffer, and Steven W. Kleinhebich, and he co-wrote a chapter in Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society with James Holstein, edited by Phillip Vaninini and Patrick Williams. He presented at a research colloquium at Odense University, Denmark. He was the keynote speaker in Oslo, Norway, at the ISA/CIFR. Conference on Families and Memory, and at the Institute of Gerontology, University of Sweden. Gubrium, David Ekert, and Marc Luborsky received a grant from the National Institute of Health for a project on the social psychology of relocation and downsizing later in life.

Victoria Johnson published "The Status of Identities: Racial Inclusion and Exclusion at West Coast Ports" in Social Move- ment Studies. She received the MU Excel- lence in Education Award in spring 2009, and the Konheim Travel Award from the American Association of University Professors. She also presented at the Organization of American Historians conference, and she was a presider and discussant for sessions at the American Sociological Association conference in San Francisco.

 Folklore

Winter 2009–10

Communique

Brekhus Receives Multiple Advising Awards

By John Pratt

The role of director of undergradu- ate studies and the Division of Sociology carries a good deal of responsibility. It includes help- ing to create and maintain academic schedules, giving advice about how to make the most of their col- lege experience, connecting stu- dents with internships, completing paperwork for graduation plans, and even discussing the transi- tions of life after college. In short, the director of undergraduate study- es often becomes the symbolic representative of the department for students. Wayne Brekhus filled this role between August 2006 and August 2009.

Brekhus recently received two advising awards one year after receiving the William T. Kem- per Teaching Award in 2008. This year’s service awards were the University of Missouri Excellence in Advising Award and the Statewide Outstanding Advising Award from the Missouri Academic Advising As- sociation (MACADA) for 2009. The MU advising award includes a plaque and $1000 and is given to one facul- ty member each year who dem- onstrates effective advising qualities and practices that distinguish the ad- visor as outstanding. The MACADA award is given only to one person in the entire state each year and in- cludes a plaque and $100 that are presented at a banquet honoring the recipient. Needless to say, Brekhus believes that service to the Univer- sity, and especially to students, is an important aspect of his overall job. “It’s humbling to see how sig- nificant your impact is on their [stu- dents’] lives. At a big university, it’s easy for a student to become a num- ber. It’s important that they find a few people from the University community who can have a signifi- cant impact on them. I try to make sure that I give a lot of attention to each student. I may have 216 stu- dents, but they only have one ad- viser.”

As his bookcase continues to fill with more books, it is a safe bet that Brekhus will also con- tinue to support students. “I like the teaching and advising side of things. I try to keep my door open and keep a lot of office hours for people to come by. I think our de- partment has an open-door culture that allows students to drop in and feel comfortable.”

For Brekhus, the real reward is not in receiving multiple service awards; it is more about watching students grow and achieve their goals. He knew each of the almost 60 undergraduate sociology majors who graduated in spring 2009. “A gratifying aspect of this position is watching students grow,” he says. “There’s a lot of change taking place between their freshman and senior years, and to be a part of that is re- warding.”

We’re Looking for You

The MU Sociology Alumni Rela- tions Committee is still looking for members of our extended academic family — i.e., you — to join a depart- ment ListServ (e-mail group).

Sign up on the list will keep you up to date on department news and inform you of upcoming events of in- terest to alumni. Possible activities include a department alumni day, networking opportunities, and lec- tures. We are working to develop an alumni Web page through which members of the “family” can keep in touch, reacquaint themselves, or meet for the first time.

Of course, the list also gives you the opportunity to share your suc- cesses with the department, as well as to consider potential opening positions. To sign up for the MU Sociology ListServ, send your preferred e-mail address to Debbie Friedrich, at fred- rich@missouri.edu.

We also invite you to become a fan of the University of Missouri Depart- ment of Sociology on Facebook. Stay up to date on department activities, connect with former classmates, and network with alumni.

We look forward to hearing from you!
At work and at play, the Department of Sociology had its usual variety of events for faculty, students, and friends to attend. Below are scenes from the annual picnic, the inaugural tailgate and football game party, and the Schlosser job talk.

Above, Mike Sickels, Jennifer Correa, Joshua Olsberg, and William Force share a conversation at the annual department picnic.

Sociology faculty and students watch the Tigers defeat Furman 52–12.

Mike Sickels and Gudmundur Oddsson discuss theory at the inaugural sociology tailgate party.

Faculty, students, and friends prepare for the Tiger football game in style.

Above, Jennifer Schlosser prior to giving her professional job talk based on her dissertation research.

The first-year graduate students enjoy their introduction to the culture of the department.
Graduate Program News

Jennifer Correa’s article “The Targeting of the East Los Angeles Brown Residents by a Racial Patriarchal Capitalist State: Merging Intersectionality and Social Movement Research” will appear in Critical Sociology. She was an invited guest lecturer during Hispanic Heritage Month at Texas AM University–Kingsville and was the graduation commencement speaker at Dilley High School, in Dilley, Texas.


Roslyn Fraser has accepted an offer to be Student Paper Competition, which included an invitation to give a guest lecture at the University of Missouri Women’s and Gender Studies Graduate Student Conference in spring 2009.

Godmundur Oddsson published his article “Class Awareness in Iceland” in the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy. He received his master’s degree in May 2009. His thesis was titled “Class Awareness in Iceland.” He presented two papers for the 2009 Midwest Sociological Society in Des Moines, Iowa, titled “Class Awareness in Iceland” and “Skipping Class.” He also won the 2009 Missouri Sociological Association’s (MSA) Graduate Student Paper Competition, which included an invitation to give a guest lecture at the annual MSA conference and a cash award. During summer 2009, he worked as a researcher for the Institute for Gender Equality.

Make a Gift

Gifts from our alumni and friends provide the opportunity to enrich the life of the department. We use gift funds in a variety of ways that benefit our students, such as providing annual cash awards for outstanding papers by undergraduates in our Mauksch Award competition and offering travel grants to scholarly conferences to graduate students who present research papers and attend sessions. In the past few years, we have received larger gifts that allowed us to address major needs, such as purchasing personal computers and a copying machine. We are immensely grateful, too, for gifts that help us build our endowment. Your generosity helps advance the department in general.

Please do make us one of your philanthropic priorities for 2010. A solid base of alumni support is one of the principal factors that distinguishes the best universities and departments from the rest. We hope you will be able to help us this year with a gift of $100, $500, or more. Donations may be mailed to the address below, or you may donate online using a credit card at https://donatemissouri.missouri.edu. Choose College of Arts and Science in the drop-down menu, then specify “Sociology” or a specific fund in the larger box below.

Questions may be directed to our office manager, Debbie Friedrich, at the Department of Sociology, 312 Middlebush Hall, Columbia, MO 65211-6100. You also may contact her at 573-882-7711 or dfriedrich@missouri.edu.

We pledge to use your contributions wisely. Thank you for your support!

Communiqué

Winter 2009–10

T he Lee Founder’s Award was es tablished in 1981 to recognize those who exemplify the ideals of the founders of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Alfred McChung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee. The ideals include research, commitment to the organization, and maybe most important, a commitment to social justice. As Galliher puts it, “All members are committed to fairness and equality. Some are activists and some are scholars, but generally all commit to equality, especially racial and gender justice.”

John Galliher is the recipient of the award for 2009. He became a member of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) in 1963 as a graduate student at Indiana University. Being of limited means, he asked his mentors, Alfred Lindesmith and Albert Cohen, if he could join only one organization, which should it be? They responded with the SSSP. That conversation may have set the stage for Galliher’s work. The award is more than a plaque to place on a bookshelf. It is the recognition of a lifetime’s worth of work that takes on special meaning for the recipient. For Galliher, “An award takes on meaning primarily because of the prior recipients, such as Irwin Deutscher and Gideon Sjöberg.” As an example of striving for social justice, Galliher is organizing a session on Troy Davis, who has been a death row inmate in Georgia for 25 years. Galliher explained that all of the people who accused Davis have recanted because they were pressured to lie, but the state is still proceeding. Galliher will be speaking on Davis’s behalf. For Galliher, this is an example of how the SSSP is not just an intellectual forum but also is a study of research ethics regarding sociological and psychological researchers’ use of human subjects through violations of human rights, and how these violations contributed to the creation of the institutional review board.

Above all, Galliher’s enthusiasm for contributing to his field is grounded in gratitude. “I really do value being able to do research. That’s what I enjoy the most,” he says.