

2018 In Review

A Note from Professor Steven Epstein, Chair



When I began my term as chair of Northwestern's Sociology department in September, I received a few congratulations and more than a few expressions of condolence. The latter came from academic friends and colleagues from elsewhere around the country—people well versed in the trials that confront department chairs, who shook their heads, rolled their eyes, and passed along the conventional wisdom that service as chair is laborious, unglamorous, and, all too often, headache-inducing.

As the academic year comes to a close, I can report that the pessimists are significantly off base when it comes to Northwestern Sociology. Yes, the work of chairing a department of 30 faculty members, 95 graduate students, 4 full-time staff members, and hundreds of undergraduate students enrolled in dozens of courses is time-consuming, and the glamor is definitely on the low side. But the job has been more pleasurable than I anticipated—not least because of all the help I've received from the department's incredibly dedicated staff and my own faculty colleagues, but also because of the spirit of collegiality that pervades and defines the department and distinguishes it from so many others. When I moved to Northwestern in 2009, I was drawn by the reputation of Northwestern Sociology as not just a world-class department but also a place where people are committed to working together, without factions or enduring frictions. Now, almost nine years later and from my vantage point as chair, I can say that the department's reputation is well deserved. And I can also see how much ongoing collective work goes into maintaining not just our excellence and our solidarity, but also an impressive amount of diversity that contributes to that excellence and does not hamper the solidarity.

Faculty Highlights

Of course, any year brings change. This year we welcomed [Andy Papachristos](#), the renowned scholar of crime and urban violence from

Yale. (Andy has been on leave and will start more formally in the fall.) Others on our faculty deserve congratulations on the occasion of their promotions. In September [Héctor Carrillo](#) and [Celeste Watkins-Hayes](#) joined the ranks of Full Professors (and Celeste was also appointed [Northwestern's Associate Vice President for Research](#)). And I'm delighted to announce that [Christine Percheski](#) has recently received word of her promotion to Associate Professor with tenure.

In the past year, two of my faculty colleagues have received exceptionally prestigious honors: [John Hagan](#) was elected to the [National Academy of Sciences](#), and [Gary Fine](#) was elected to the [American Academy of Arts and Sciences](#). Among many other prizes bestowed on our faculty, [Aldon Morris](#) received a lifetime achievement award, the [John D. McCarthy Award](#) and was recently featured in *Weinberg Magazine* article, "[The Scholar Resurrected](#)."

Sadly, we recently lost our beloved colleague [Art Stinchcombe](#), the emeritus John Evans Professor Sociology, who passed away on July 3 at the age of 85. Art was a legendary sociologist; you can read an obituary [here](#). On behalf of the department, I want to extend our collective sympathies to Art's spouse, our colleague [Carol Heimer](#).

Graduate Program

Those of you familiar with the tight academic job market will sit up and take note when I report that every one of our graduate students who went on the market in a serious way this year received at least one job or postdoc offer. Our recent Ph.Ds will be [taking up new posts](#) at Harvard, Yale, UC-Santa Barbara, UC-Irvine, Purdue, Tulane, Loyola, and George Washington University, among others.

Undergraduate Program

Our undergraduate majors also excelled this year, with several of them writing [fascinating honors theses](#). We are also pleased to continue honoring the legacy of William H. Exum with our annual [Exum Award](#), which is given for the best undergraduate paper dealing with race and ethnicity.

Alumni/ae

We track the accomplishments of our alumni/ae, and we're proud of their continued successes. For example, **Sarah Willie-LeBreton** (Ph.D 1995) recently was named the next Provost of Swarthmore College, while **Elijah**

Anderson (Ph.D 1976) is receiving this year's W.E.B. DuBois Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award, a lifetime achievement award for sociologists. We encourage our alumni/ae to keep us posted on news of this sort!

These are all reasons why I'm proud to be part of Northwestern Sociology. Before I close and wish everyone a happy summer, I want to express my thanks to the alumni/ae who regularly donate to the department. Our department finances are increasingly stretched thin, and every bit of funding we receive is quite important in allowing us to do our work. Additional donations would help us support our famous weekly speaker series, continue to expand our array of faculty/graduate student workshops, provide more funding for graduate student travel for research and to present work at conferences, and create new opportunities for undergraduates to be hired to work as research assistants alongside our faculty. Please don't hesitate to contact me to discuss ways in which your own contributions could prove instrumental.

With warm wishes, and the hope that you will stay in touch and let us know of your accomplishments!

Steve Epstein
Chair and Professor of Sociology
John C. Schaffer Professor in the Humanities



Northwestern Sociology alumni and faculty at the recent DuBoisian Scholars Network convening, May 18-19, 2018. From left to right: Ruby Mendenhall (Ph.D, HDSP, 2004), Tennille Allen (Ph.D, Sociology, 2009), BarBara Scott (Ph.D, Sociology, 1988), Mary Pattillo (Professor), Celeste Watkins-Hayes (Professor).

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Our department continues to be known for its cross-disciplinary work, with our faculty and students play leading roles in many programs and departments across campus, including:

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- [The Sexualities Project at Northwestern \(SPAN\)](#)

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