

Sociology and Anthropology

“For me, the social world is now both less of a mystery and more of a mystery at the same time. Actually, it is more shocking to me, as I easily recognize the inequalities present in our society. Especially, after courses like Media and the Public Mind and Race and Ethnic Relations, I find myself being more critical of power and dominance and more compassionate toward the unequal treatment of certain social groups.”

Alissa Benjamin '10

The department of sociology and anthropology combines two distinct, yet related, disciplines and offers a major and minor in sociology—an interdisciplinary major that includes coursework in both sociology and anthropology, and a minor in anthropology. In addition, faculty can offer students interested in law, criminal justice, global studies, health fields, human-social services, public policy, or urban studies, a recommended course of study that will provide a strong preprofessional foundation.

Sociology and anthropology courses also contribute to the following interdisciplinary programs: Gender, sexuality, and women’s studies; ethnic studies; environmental studies; and a minor in civic engagement.

ANTHROPOLOGY: Thinking anthropologically allows us to explore the rich diversity in human life and encourages respect for individuals and for other cultures. Anthropology is built upon extended observation of people in the places where they reside, while participating directly in activities whenever possible.

SOCIOLOGY: Sociology encourages us to look at society with a fresh perspective, to question our taken-for-granted assumptions, to investigate people’s actions, and to explore the organization of society. Our courses provide a basis for thinking about social alternatives, imagining possibilities for social justice, and being engaged citizens.

The mission of the sociology and anthropology department is to foster a critical consciousness concerning how different cultures and societies organize, make sense of, and change their worlds. Students are engaged in a challenging, yet supportive, learning environment in which they develop an awareness of their social location, respect for diverse experiences and cultures, and commitment to social justice.

BENEFITS OF ONE COURSE AT A TIME

Cornell’s One Course At A Time schedule facilitates strong learning communities and allows professors to approach material from multiple perspectives and in a variety of teaching and learning styles. Courses incorporate discussions, lectures, films, and other experiential learning activities.

Direct studies of culture are critical to the practice of anthropology, and the block plan enables field-based studies on a regular basis. For example, students conduct daily archaeological fieldwork with State Archaeologist John Doershuk at a local site during Archaeological Field Methods. Professor Misha Quill’s Anthropology of Tourism students travel to the Bahamas to explore the impact of tourism and development on local culture. Her 2017 Applied Anthropology course will take place in Ireland, where students will investigate the contemporary changes that connect the island nation to the European Union (and to the rest of the world) through immigration, refugees, and global economic crises.

Understanding social change is critical to the practice of sociology. Students in Professor Barnes-Brus’ course, Community Development, Public Policy,

Faculty Bios & Courses

TORI BARNES-BRUS

Associate Professor of Sociology

Teaches courses on inequality, deviance and social control, reproduction, media, and research methods. Her courses demonstrate a dedication to social justice, and many involve field trips or incorporate public sociology projects. She has sponsored numerous student research projects at the Iowa Sociological Association and the Midwest Sociological Society meetings. Her own research investigates the cultural construction and commercialization of womanhood and reproduction. Ph.D., M.A., University of Kansas; B.A., Cornell College.

ERIN DAVIS

Professor of Sociology & Associate Dean of the College

Explores cultural diversity and social inequalities, focusing on gender, sexualities, bodies, and identities in her courses and her research. She also works closely with students on their research, sponsoring student presentations at the Iowa Sociological Association and Midwest Sociological Society meetings. Her research has examined transgender identification and the social regulation of gender, as well as women’s experiences in male-dominated leisure activities. Ph.D., M.A., University of Virginia; B.A., New College.

MARY B. OLSON

Professor of Sociology

Teaches courses in sociology that address social inequality and social change, including American Indians: Culture, Activism, and Social Justice; Race and Ethnic Relations; The African American Civil Rights Movement Through Film; and Religion, Spirituality, and Community. Her research with native tribes focuses on fishing rights in the Pacific Northwest. Ph.D., M.S., B.A., University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh.



and Social Change, spend two to three weeks at the McLennan Center in Chicago, learning directly from community leaders and organizers working on issues of poverty, violence, public health, education, housing, and community engagement. Professor Erin Davis also regularly leads a block-long course in Japan that focuses on Japanese culture, human rights, and public policy issues.

Other courses extend the classroom learning experience with shorter field trips to sites such as a local community-supported farm, nearby emergency shelters and women's centers, and local grocery stores, hospitals, and museums. We also bring experts into the classroom. Guests have included Breanne Fahs, professor of women and gender studies at Arizona State University, who specializes in women's sexuality and political activism; Robin Marty, author and reproductive justice activist; Dolores Huerta, grassroots labor and civil rights activist; Ami Mattison, spoken word poet-performing artist; Zach Kelin, lawyer who has worked for the Navajo Nation; Daniel Caropreso, U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Officer for the Southern District of Iowa; and Suparna Bhaskaran, health care policy analyst.

STUDENT RESEARCH

In a range of courses, including research methods, and through independent studies and work with faculty members, students develop individual research projects and regularly present their research at the Cornell College Student Symposium, the Iowa Sociological Association Annual Meeting, and the Midwest Sociological Society Annual Meeting. In addition to presenting their research, several students have applied for and received awards at both of these annual professional meetings.

SELECT RECENT INTERNSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS

- Office of the State Archaeologist, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa
- United Way of Dane County, Madison, Wisconsin
- Waypoint Services, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Jeremiah Project, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Overseas Migration Museum, Kobe, Japan
- Catherine McAuley Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Linn County Department of Public Health, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Covenant House of Texas, Houston, Texas
- Willis Dady Homeless Services, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

AFTER CORNELL

ALUMNI CAREERS

Peace Corps volunteer, Costa Rica and Paraguay, (Class of 2017)

Resident assistant, Willis Dady Homeless Services, Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Class of 2017)

Survey and rail crew, AmeriCorps, Utah Conservation Corps, Cedar City, Utah (Class of 2017)

San Antonio Police Department, San Antonio, Texas (Class of 2017)

Victim advocate, Waypoint, Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Class of 2017)

Youth specialist, Foundation 2, Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Class of 2017)

Project manager, Meta-Culture, Bengaluru, India (Class of 2015)

Support Services coordinator, Catherine McAuley Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Class of 2014)

Industrial director, Nova Medical Centers, Arlington, Texas (Class of 2014)

Administrative assistant, The Trust for Public Land, St. Paul, Minnesota (Class of 2014)

Office manager, National Autistic Society Scotland, Glasgow, Scotland (Class of 2013)

Social worker, Jewish Child and Family Service, Chicago, Illinois (Class of 2011)

Living Wage Program administrator and contract compliance officer, City of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri (Class of 2011)

GRADUATE SCHOOLS

M.A., library and information science, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (Class of 2017)

M.A., applied sociology, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee (Class of 2017)

M.A., social work, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland (Class of 2013)

M.A., anthropology, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina (Class of 2013)

M.A., conflict resolution, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado (Class of 2013)

M.S., higher education and student affairs, Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, Indiana (Class of 2012)

M.A., social work, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois (Class of 2012)

Ph.D., sociology, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (Class of 2011)

J.D., Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri (Class of 2011)

MISHA QUILL

Assistant Professor of Anthropology

Teaches courses in justice, gender, human rights, medical anthropology, religious practice, and research methods. Her courses, which focus on the social world, often include trips in places such as India, the Bahamas, Ireland, Mexico, and Cuba. Quill's research in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Ireland focuses largely on the complex interactions that NGOs and nonprofits have with the people they seek to help. Ph.D., M.A., University of Iowa; B.A., College of St. Catherine.

JILL DAVIS

Teaching Fellow in Sociology

Specializes in culture, bodies, and identity, with a research focus on drag kings and queens in the U.S. Joining the Cornell faculty in the Fall of 2017, Davis will teach courses on gender, sexuality, identity, and families. Ph.D., M.A., University of Iowa; B.A., University of Minnesota.

JUDY SIEBERT

Lecturer

Specializes in linguistics with an emphasis on Latin America. Ph.D., M.A., University of Iowa; B.A., Augustana College.

JOHN DOERSHUK

Lecturer, Iowa State Archeologist

Teaches archeology courses and has supervised numerous Cornell internships and student projects on seven different Iowa field sites since 2007.