



Sociology on the Rock

Sociology on the Rock, Issue 11

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“As human beings, we are not condemned to be swept along by forces that have the inevitability of laws of nature. But this means that we must be conscious of the alternative futures that are potentially open to us” **Anthony Giddens**



Linda Cohen successfully defended her PhD thesis, “The ‘Other’ Professors: Job Insecurity, Health and Coping Strategies among Contractual University Teachers.” Front row: **Bob Hill, Linda Cohen, Linda Cullum**. Back row: **Lewis Fischer, Nicole Power, Karen Stanbridge, and Barbara Neis**.

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OUR NEW COLLEAGUES

Alan Hall

After almost twenty years as a full-time academic, I want to begin by admitting that this was not at all my career plan. When I decided to do my PhD, I was never intending to become an academic. I had finished my MA in community psychology and was working at a Toronto community mental health centre doing community outreach and program evaluation research for various prevention programs. Most of the programs were focused on low-income families and communities which fit perfectly with my interests at the time. While firmly committed to continuing as an applied researcher in the realm of health and poverty, I thought a doctorate was essential to a full-fledged research career where I could develop and seek research grants and larger projects. Although intending to stick with the mental health field, I decided to shift my discipline to

sociology for my PhD because I wanted to develop my understanding of survey and qualitative methods and because I realized that psychology was rather limited when it came to theorizing about the social, political, and economic origins of poverty.

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Zombie Economics, Sociology, and North America's Celtic Tiger

By **James Overton**

Introduction

The activities of academics are rarely discussed in public. But such occasions do sometimes occur. One such period of academic self-examination and public scrutiny was the second half of the 1960s when, as Mark Solovey tells us, “relations between the national-security state and academia became embedded in divisive arguments about the nature of American society and its role on the world stage.” The catalyst for this debate about the use and abuse of social science by the state – what he termed “the politics-patronage-social science nexus” – was the revelation that Project Camelot, a six-million dollar, military-sponsored study of the revolutionary process, had been initiated by the government of the United States (“Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus,” *Social Studies of Science*, 31, 2001: 183).

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THE CLIPBOARD

By **Stephen Riggins**

Cinema Politica St. John's, founded in April 2013, hosted its 10th screening in January 2014. The group has shown a variety of films on topics including gender (“Buying Sex”

and “Status Quo? The Unfinished Business of Feminism in Canada”), environmental issues (“Vanishing of the Bees” and “Salmon Confidential”), and resource extraction in Canada and abroad (“The Pipe,” “Shattered Ground,” and “White Water, Black Gold”). Cinema Politica St. John’s has collaborated with a number of local groups to co-host screenings and raise funds for various organizations. Collaborators include the St. John’s office of the National Film Board, the Newfoundland Food Security Network, The People and The Sea Film Festival, and the Department of Sociology’s Oil and Development course.

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1. John McLevey and Allyson Stokes at a party following their PhD graduation ceremony at McMaster University.
2. Three new Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada. MUN President Gary Kachanoski, Barbara Neis (sociology Fellow 2012), Peter Pope (history Fellow 2012), Carole Peterson (psychology Fellow 2012), and President of the Royal Society of Canada Graham Bell.
3. Sociology student Jenna Hawkins who talked at MUNButtoned about her MA study “Work-life Balance Policies, Practices, and Programs in the Office: How are Workers Supported?” MUNButtoned, held at The Rocket Room on Water Street, was presented by the Harris Centre as part of Open Doors, a week-long initiative of the Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges.
4. Doug House, Marilyn Porter, and Ron Schwartz at the sociology department party honouring recently retired professors.
5. Qian Wei and Tanya Goyal joined Dr. Linda Cullum on the Take Back the Night Walk in St. John’s.

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Roger Krohn (1931-2012), An Inspirational Sociologist

When I started the third year of my undergraduate degree at the new campus of Memorial University in 1962, I still had no clear idea, like many students, of what I wanted to do. I had tried physical education but decided that sports would be the fun part of my life, not my life’s work. I was interested in psychology but was more interested in human behaviour than experiments with rats and other animals. I decided to enroll in an introductory sociology course, not really knowing what sociology was.

I still vividly remember the first day of class. The professor came in – he was young, blond, wore thick glasses and, when he spoke, had a slight but attractive speech

impediment. He started to talk and to write certain key words and phrases, rather illegibly, on the blackboard. He spoke quietly but passionately. He told us that there is a common human nature; that human nature is universal; that human nature is plastic; and that man (in the generic sense in which the term was used at that time) is a social product. He traced out a simple diagram on the blackboard showing how social organization, culture and personality are interdependent and mutually determinant. He explained that sociology aspires to be the science of human social behaviour and, to the extent possible, to be objective and value free. Nevertheless, he implied that there are moral implications to the worldview he was presenting, a view that is inherently humanistic, egalitarian and democratic. I was to learn later that the professor, whose name was Roger Krohn, was to maintain his passion for sociology and live by the moral principles implied by the sociological perspective for his whole life.

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Dr. Ralph Matthews received the 2012 Outstanding Contribution Award from the Canadian Sociological Association. Dr. Matthews is Professor of sociology at the University of British Columbia and retired professor from McMaster University. He grew up in St. John's, completed his undergraduate studies at MUN, and taught at MUN for several years. Dr. Matthews has published major contributions to the study of Newfoundland society; environmental sociology, including the East Coast fishery; the study of social inequality; and the sociology of health. Photo by Anna Vu.

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Congratulations to Terry Murphy who has been awarded a Ph.D. degree for a thesis titled *The Quest for Contented Sobriety: A Dramaturgical Analysis of Recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous*. Participating in the oral defense committee for Terry's thesis were (first row, left to right): Judy Adler, Terry Murphy, Robert Hill, Scott Kenny, Ailsa Craig, and Peter Whitridge, MUN Department of Archaeology and the Dean of Arts Representative on the committee. Peter Sinclair, retired MUN sociologist; and Dr. Richard Thatcher of Socio-tech Consulting Services in Saskatchewan, also participated in the oral defense but are not pictured.

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The Clipboard

By Stephen Riggins

Ph.D. student Paula Graham has started a Cinema Politica chapter in St. John's. Cinema Politica is a Montreal-based, non-profit network of community and university associations which screen popular documentary films related to social justice. More than forty people attended the first screening in St. John's. She has received financial support for this initiative from the department of sociology; her efforts were reported in The Telegram and The Independent.

Shattered Ground (a film about fracking) will be shown on July 16. Previous films in the St. John's series have been The Pipe (a film about the impact of oil on a small Irish village) and Surviving Progress (on human evolution).

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