

# SOCIOLOGY ON THE ROCK

## Sociology Department Newsletter

*Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador*



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Judith Adler at the Signal Hill National Park, St. John's.

## Judith Adler retires

By Stephen Harold Riggins

Judy Adler's retirement from teaching is a turning point in the MUN Department of Sociology. She was the last professor to retire who was part of the "old department." I use that expression for professors appointed before 1990. There was a long period of stability in the department beginning in the mid-1970s until sometime in the 1990s. Most students would know her as an instructor in the large second-year course, sociology of families (Soc. 2270). She achieved the longest teaching record of anyone in the history of our department, 1974 to 2025, a record that may never be broken.

Adler could be understood as a member of the second generation of American pioneers in the sociology of culture and the arts. She succeeded in appearing in the world's number-one journal among mainstream sociologists despite writing about tourism ("Travel as Performed Art," *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1989). The feature that most distinguishes her career from mainstream sociologists is her intense interest in history including remarkably ancient history – early Christian asceticism, early Christian monasticism, and medieval pilgrimage.

In her view, typical sociological research on tourism lacks historical depth and is limited to recreation and leisure. In "Travel as Performed Art," she asks readers to take seriously a counter-intuitive idea that travel can be a self-consciously performed secular art. Sociologists should include in their research on the norms of traveling the travelers' own understandings of the meaning of their movements through geographical space. (Neither all human-made objects nor all of our movements through space qualify as art.) In doing this, she borrows concepts from art history, for example, styles and standards of performance.

Judy's father was a prominent San Francisco psychologist, who was a critic of the 1960s Counterculture (Nathan Adler, *The Underground Stream: New Life Styles and the Antinomian Personality*). Her mother, a lecturer in the School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley, performed in an early dance piece by future icons of the 1960s, composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham.

This is how she explained to me her attraction to the sociology of art. Adler writing to Riggins 2010:

"I was one of those who, never taken to church or synagogue, had my early spiritual experiences either in 'the open,' or in Europe's museums. Which I first discovered at the age of 12 and then really haunted during a year in Europe at the age of 18 when I compulsively visited every museum I could reach by hitchhiking, took notes on the contents, and lived a considerable amount of my cognitive life in thinking about what I saw, I even bought what I could. An etching by Rufino Tamayo, for example that I bought after hitchhiking to Zurich and living in youth hostels on spaghetti *without* sauce because it was cheaper. I loved the art that I came to know in Europe with a truly adolescent love.

In graduate school I drifted back into a 'field,' where I had found beauty and transcendence. But also read a lot of junk for qualifying exams. Someone should have saved me from reading Marxist junk in particular. This was the late sixties after all and I regret much of the stuff I wasted my young brain on at that time. Approaching art as work, new at that time, was probably determined in part by Everett Hughes' presence on the Brandeis faculty, and maybe also by the ambiance of the Marxist movement in which I was engaged in other ways. But that approach was satisfying in part because it cleared away a lot of romantic pieties and ahistorical claptrap.

I lost my first part-time job in Massachusetts by sticking up for students who had committed themselves to the anti-war movement. And without other means of support accepted a job offered to me at Cal Arts in Burbank, California which ended by immersing me in a community of first-rate artists, film-makers and musicians. The Humanities Unit in which I was employed lost its funding and I wrote *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* with the sensation of being in a burning collapsing building. I wrote it basically without any help or guidance, and for whatever reason (I think now) it was good. The very young and inexperienced girl who wrote it saw clearly and with heart.

Later, my passion became travel, and in the same way that I had found it interesting to think of art as work, I came to find it helpful to think of travel as an art."

Adler had student experiences that would be hard to find other than among affluent natives of California. As a student, she studied with professors who were once household names among sociologists. Four<sub>2</sub>

teachers are credited for inspiring her to become a sociologist and to remain committed to a version of sociology with fluid boundaries overlapping history, political science, and psychology. One was Egon Bittner, an authority on policing, who survived imprisonment in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Second was Maurice Stein, best known as the author of *The Eclipse of Community* and co-editor of *Sociology on Trial*, who introduced her to the sociology of culture. Third, was the theorist Kurt H. Wolff who seems to have been an ideal supervisor. Wolff is remembered as a translator and a contributor to the sociology of knowledge and ethnography. Fourth was Everett Hughes, important for his teaching about the value of eclectic qualitative methods and his emphasis on the sociology of work and occupations.

At Davis, she studied the sociology of art with César Graña. At Brandeis her instructors included Morris Schwartz, known to millions of people through Mitch Albom's best-seller *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. When attending the University of Bordeaux, she heard Robert Escarpit lecture about the sociology of literature, and Jacques Ellul lecture about technology and labor movements.

"Judy Adler's most outstanding virtue – she has many," Kurt Wolff wrote, "is her marvelous sensitivity, in every sense of the word: moral, political, aesthetic. Associated with this sensitivity is extraordinary tact, but also an outstanding capacity to communicate. . . . She has a very strong presence. It is just as delightful as it is strong."

The publication about political activists at provincial colleges that she mentioned appeared in the popular left-wing magazine *Liberation*, not quite the venue you might expect for Adler, although at the time she thought it was OK, even preferred. She was a Visiting Lecturer at the Southeastern Massachusetts University in North Dartmouth. The topic is the way journalists concentrated on student protests at elite universities and thus overlooked the diversity of institutions in American higher education including students from working-class backgrounds who confronted administrators with different political opinions than those at elite institutions. Adler was motivated to write about the political activism of the Counterculture because she had participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement.

*Artists in Offices* is one of the books from the pioneer era in the sociology of the arts which is still referenced. It is a study of the death of the utopian ideals of the California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts).

A glance at the foreword shows that Adler knew almost every significant young American sociologist of her generation who was specializing in the study of the arts. In the early 1970s she taught at Cal Arts, then a flamboyant, ambitious institution ironically subsidized by the Walt Disney Studio. *Artists in Offices* recounts its rapid evolution from a utopian adventure to a conventional art school. The dreamers were not able to meet their financial obligations even before the school opened. *Artists in Offices* thus traces the conflicts between avant-garde art and the aesthetic conservatism of the school's financial backers, between the social egalitarianism of hippies and the celebrity status of a few star artists; conflicts among political radicals and artistic radicals, hippie informality and bureaucracy, and professional and amateur art worlds. Her ethnography represents a "loser's perspective." She had been hired to teach in the first department which was axed when the school encountered financial problems.

Although sometimes critical of Robert Nisbet, she agrees with him that there is an underlying similarity between art and the best sociology. The emotional engagement and sympathetic imagination of ethnography and historical narratives resemble art more than the natural sciences. The insights required to write a convincing realist novel is similar to the skills required by a sociologist. We might talk about the mood of a social theory as we talk about the mood of a painted portrait or landscape. The recording and reconstruction of events requires intuition and inspired metaphors. Typical of Hughes and Nisbet's theoretical and methodological eclecticism, Adler summarizes her undergraduate education in terms of charismatic individuals who had a mission rather than with any theoretical perspective that would be taught in an undergraduate social theory course.

There are autobiographical dimensions in her discussion of Nisbet. Solitary research can be a search for an imaginary community that is not easy to establish in one's personal life. Her career is unusual in that the search for community led to an ancient literature that many secular-minded sociologists would find too irritating to read. Her CV also includes articles about Karl Marx's son-in-law, the conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet, and the novelist George Eliot. But she has also made contributions to more central subjects in sociology: Tocqueville, Hannah Arendt, and environmental philosophy. She was an invited keynote speaker at a conference on angels. Angels, too, have a history. They did not always have wings.

Where faculty members choose to live in St. John's says a lot about the kind of person they are. In 1975 Adler moved from Pouch Cove to the Outer Battery, the "outport in the city." It was still a fishing community with a cohesive working-class population. Houses are nestled along a thin strip of land between the ocean and Signal Hill National Park. Adler became a proud member of a neighborhood collective which published an oral history of the Battery titled *Out to the Battery: Oral Histories*. Her old, working-class home, because of its location, appears in countless photographs of St. John's. Adler writing to Riggins 2010:

"When I arrived, St. John's had a tiny little airport like a northern town. Downtown there were none of the flowers we take for granted. Nor the supermarkets we now have. You could buy whale meat at Bidgood's Supermarket and seal meat at the harbor, but you could not get any lettuce other than iceberg lettuce. There were no coffee shops. I was used to living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where you sat in coffee shops and read newspapers.

Although St. John's was somewhat exotic and cosmopolitan, it was also parochial and I was sometimes terribly lonely. What was cosmopolitan and exotic for someone like me was the Institute of Social and Economic Research. People there were giving talks on Ireland and Norway. I was thrown in with anthropologists who were writing about the whole north Atlantic. The harbor in St. John's was truly international. The harbor was filled with fishing boats. There was an active fishery. The Portuguese White Fleet visited St. John's. The Portuguese had been coming here for centuries. They and the Spanish played pelota downtown. These people who had traditionally been coming here for a long time were a part of the city. The Russians were also wandering around. In my opinion, Newfoundlanders had a caste system between themselves and come-from-aways even if we were both white.

I lived in St. John's at the height of the Newfoundland revival, which created the most exciting theater I had seen anywhere, and I had come straight from California. This was CODCO and the Mummers. A nationalist cultural revival was vibrant. What came with it was a kind of hostile parochialism. The Memorial University library was always good. That was important since there were no good bookstores in town. Because of the quality of the university library, I did not feel that I had moved to a parochial backwater. Some of the sociologists who came here were interested in a back-to-the-land movement. A few members of the department raised goats, sheep,

and geese; and were interested in kelp and offal composting. They were fascinated by the outdoors. The outports were so different then."

When candidates came to MUN for job interviews, Adler was predictably one of the faculty members who asked the most thought-provoking questions. I tried to discover the logic which inspired her questions. Certainly there was no formula, but she did look for the political bias and contradictions in the speaker's lectures and the questions from the audience. When I was learning Taoist Tai Chi, I enthusiastically told her that I had discovered how a Taoist sage could be accorded charismatic status by his students despite doing almost nothing. Adler was not impressed by my naiveté. "How do you tell the difference," she asked me, "between silence which hides profound thoughts and silence which hides ignorance?"

"I try to remember," she wrote me in 2010, "the person I once was and knew so imperfectly many, many years ago. I think I had a youthful longing, a strong one, for contact with beauty and transcendence, a word that begs a lot of questions, but I'll use it. A longing. And it drove me to many things, the sociology of art was only one of them. An impulse to geographical explorations, to places like Ethiopia and Yemen.

And what went part and parcel with this was a disinclination for some of the sociological literature that seemed core to the field, but lacked any beauty for me. I remember, for example, my disinclination to study and admire Mirra Komarovsky's *Blue-Collar Marriage*. A pioneer work, no doubt. But I had never wanted to be a wife, would if anything have fled anything having to do with that, and didn't even want to read about it. So my impulse was to read about, seek contact with, what I could admire. What held out some promise of beauty, mystery, extreme ambition. Even when I read socialists as a graduate student and wrote about them, it was their "unrealistic" utopianism, not their reformism, that attracted me. Then, around 1969-70, I grew up a little and began to become impatient with romanticism. Youth, youth, youth. What another country!"

I recommend these publications as an ideal introduction to Judith Adler's research:

"Eichmann in Jerusalem: Heuristic Myth and Social Science," *The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Peter Baehr and Philip Walsh (Eds.). London: Anthem Press, 2017, 75-106.

“Youth on the Road: Reflections on the History of Tramping,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12, 1985, 335-354.

“Cultivating Wilderness: Environmentalism and Legacies of Early Christian Asceticism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, January 2006, 4-37.

“Sociology as an Art Form: One Facet of the Conservative Sociology of Robert Nisbet,” *The American Sociologist*, March 2014, 8-21.

“Travel as Performed Art,” *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1989, 1366-1391.

## Bus Etiquette: Navigating social Norms in Transit

By **Susan Goli**

Growing up in a city that never sleeps, I was immediately struck by the rhythm of daily life in St. John’s, which is a much smaller city. One of the most significant differences I noticed was the city’s public transportation system. Unlike other major metropolitan areas in Canada, public transportation in St. John’s is limited to buses, Metrobus, with specific hours of operation that provide commuting for scattered neighborhoods. While public transportation is often viewed simply as a means of getting from one place to another, it does create a complex social space where individuals negotiate norms, engage in unspoken communication, and agree on the terms and conditions of using the bus as a public space as soon as they enter (see Romit Chowdhury, *City of Men: Masculinities and Everyday Morality on Public Transport*).



Metrobus waiting to pick up students at the MUN campus.

My initial observations of the Metrobus system, with its specific routes and schedules, led me to question how such a seemingly mundane utility functions, how individuals make sense of their bus-riding experiences, interact with others, and interpret and maintain the norms on public transit. Many scholars

(for example, Elijah Anderson, Romit Chowdhury, Davina Cooper) have shown that public transit is a key site for understanding urban life and how it is significant to examine the daily routine to better understand social issues (C. Wright Mills, Susie Scott). However, these studies took place mainly in metropolitan areas and urban nodes with different modes of public transportation, resulting in few studies on the social dynamics of a more limited transit system, such as St. John’s Metrobus.

To address this gap and explore the social world of the Metrobus, I adopted a symbolic interactionist framework. This perspective, founded by George Herbert Mead and refined by later scholars such as Herbert Blummer and Erving Goffman, is particularly well-suited for analyzing the face-to-face interactions that occur in a shared space. It emphasizes that individuals create meaning through verbal and non-verbal communication, which in turn shapes their behavior and social reality. Using this lens, I employed an ethnographic approach to conduct my research. This approach allowed me to immerse myself in the field to understand the rhythm, become familiar with the setting, and study people in a natural setting (van den Hoonaard & van den Scott, *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*, 4th ed.).

I documented the daily routines, unspoken rules, and social interactions through direct observation and field notes. To meet the ethics standards of the *Tri-council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* I did not take notes of the identifiable characteristics of the bus riders and did not interview people. I started collecting my data in July 2024 and continued until June 2025, when I reached data saturation point. The study population is unique because of the far distances between places, weather, and limited bus services. For these reasons, most people drive cars, leaving the population of bus riders consisting mainly of international students, tourists, and relatively poor people. The majority of

the riders change according to the season. During fall and winter there are more students on the bus.

After eleven months of systematic observation on the Metrobus, the rhythms of this unique transit system and its particular rider population revealed key insights into its social dynamics. The collected data indicated that the Metrobus operates as a crucial social space of integration and socializing. My findings underscore the symbolic nature of verbal communication in public spaces. The act of talking on the bus is a variable with social significance and accepted behavior; however, I found that four key elements can transform acceptable social acts into violations of the norms regulating this public space. After these boundaries are crossed, riders no longer perform what Erving Goffman called "civil inattention" – that is, respectful but minimal recognition of a stranger in a public space. They gave clues to fellow riders to maintain the unspoken rule of silence on the bus through meaningful looks and/or reminding noisy speakers that they were in a public space. These four variables are duration, language, loudness, and age.

The duration of a conversation symbolizes a claim on the shared spaces of the bus. Brief, polite conversations, whether on the phone or with other riders, are seen as a necessary part of social exchanges, such as asking for directions, but extended conversations that lasted for the majority of the ride triggered a reaction ranging from shifting body language to direct confrontations in which the bus driver intervenes to end the conversations. Thus, the presence of strangers on the bus was acknowledged through sustained engagement, making a fraction of a violation of social order acceptable in order to maintain a more general one. Likewise, the loudness of one's voice was a direct measure of respect for the unspoken social contract of civil inattention. Whispers were ignored as long as the volume of the conversations did not undermine the convention that passengers ride in silence.

However, a loud voice on the bus could lead to a significant violation of civil inattention because it forced the attention of those who wished to remain anonymous and disengaged. In an interactionist sense, a loud speaker is making an implicit claim to the entire social space of the bus, asserting their conversation's importance over the collective desire for peace and quiet. This act was often met with immediate, though non-verbal, resistance. My findings showed various reactions, from passengers pointedly turning their head to give disapproving glances to the speaker, to others sighing audibly and/or changing their seats, if possible. Occasionally,

speakers faced verbal confrontations and denial of service from the bus drivers, when the conversation was loud enough to distract the driver or when the content of the conversation was inappropriate for a public space with various age groups.

Language is another indicator of the boundaries of social norms. My findings showed that language serves as a powerful symbol of social identity within the microcosm of the bus. English conversations that were loud and lengthy, triggered more social cues of norm violation from other passengers. On the other hand, non-English, lengthy and loud conversations were more tolerated. This tolerance seemed to stem from, at times, a subtle form of social deference toward the bus's significant international student and newcomer populations. Riders, particularly those from the host community, appeared to grant a degree of latitude to conversations they did not understand. This behavior, in my research, pointed to "outsider grace" (Thomas Shepherd, "Grace for Outsiders: How God Brings Outsiders In"), where the symbolic violation of the norm of silence is weighed against a more general understanding that those conversations are not part of the local social fabric and, therefore, do not directly "claim" the same social space.

Age, the fourth element of talking in my data, has its nuances and combines with other elements to trigger the social responses of other riders. For instance, young English speakers engaging in loud conversations on the bus triggered glances of disapproval and head shakes by multiple passengers during the ride (more than twice from the same person) which is completely opposite to the reaction of young people who did not appear to be native speakers of English. The latter group only triggered uncomfortable shifting in seats and people were actively trying to give them space and avoided sitting near them in unoccupied seats. I did not find any significant difference between confronting adult English and non-English loud speakers indicating the social expectation of following adult norms, while there was a significant difference in confronting English and non-English children and/or teenagers.

In conclusion, my ethnographic study of St. John's Metrobus affirmed that public transit is far more than a simple utility similar to the literature on major cities. It is a complex and dynamic social space governed by its own set of unspoken rules, although a variation on behavior in other cities. Through a symbolic interactionist lens, my research revealed that clear, though unwritten, boundaries of communication maintained the social contract of the bus. The variables of duration, loudness, language, and age

function as symbolic cues that, when violated, prompt passengers to abandon civil inattention and collectively enforce the norms of the space. In the context of a smaller, more intimate city like St. John's, where social circles may overlap more frequently, the mentioned public displays of disapproval can carry greater social weight than they might in a larger, more anonymous metropolis. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of urban social life by demonstrating how everyday routines and seemingly minor interactions are crucial to community-building in a city defined by its specific rhythms and population.

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*is rooted in the study of everyday life and the social mechanisms of trust. Goli's perspective is uniquely shaped by a multidisciplinary background in American Studies, where her Master's research focused on the lived experiences and social trajectories of racial minorities. This foundation in ethnic and minority studies informs her current investigation into how trust – specifically regarding technology and cybersecurity – is navigated across different generations. By examining the "micro" interactions of daily existence, she aims to highlight how systemic social norms and identity influence the ways individuals negotiate safety and reliability in an increasingly digital world.*

## Behind the Green Curtain: Social Media and the Illusion of Sustainability

By **Fatemeh Zahmatkesh**

It was just another ordinary evening spent browsing Instagram. I stopped on a gorgeously styled post that showed a model spinning in a field full of wildflowers while wearing a flowing beige dress. The caption read, "Kind to you, kind to the planet #SustainableFashion #EarthLover." Curious, I clicked. The brand was one I recognized for its quick fashion turnaround. Despite the friendly imagery and calming green colours, something felt off. How could a company known for weekly product drops and synthetic fabrics suddenly claim to be "sustainable?"

That moment of doubt wasn't out of the ordinary; it served as the inspiration for my thesis, "Behind the Green Curtain: Social Media as a Platform for Greenwashing." I aimed to comprehend why many corporate sustainability claims seemed more like a show than sincere attempts. I looked at how social media apps like Instagram and TikTok have developed into effective platforms for this kind of display. "Greenwashing" creates a false impression of how ecologically friendly a company's operations or goods are (Delmas & Burbano, "The Drivers of Greenwashing," *California Management Review*, 2011). These days, companies use hashtags like #EcoFriendly or #ConsciousConsumer to present themselves as environmentally conscious, sometimes without making significant operational changes.

Unlike traditional advertisements, social media marketing thrives on aesthetics and emotion. On Instagram and TikTok, sustainability isn't just stated, it's performed. This phenomenon, what scholars call "aestheticized greenwashing," relies on the visual grammar of sustainability (Tama Leaver et al., *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*, 2020).

Platforms reward this kind of content. Their algorithms prioritize beauty, brevity, and resonance, not transparency. This creates a perfect storm: companies can reap reputational rewards for appearing sustainable without doing the hard work of environmental reform (Yan Chen et al., "Using Social Media Images as Data in Social Science Research," *New Media & Society*, 2023).

Users aren't always fooled. Commentators often ask tough questions and even hijack hashtags to call out greenwashing (#FastFashionKills, #EcoScam). TikTok creators remix corporate videos and add critical commentary to highlight contradictions (Yasmin Koop-Monteiro et al., "Animals and Climate Change: A Visual and Discourse Network Analysis of Instagram Posts," *Environmental Sociology*, 2023). My thesis examines how greenwashing is created and challenged on Instagram and TikTok. Instead of focusing just on corporate websites or sustainability reports, I examine content driven by hashtags. This includes posts from brands, influencers, and critical users. This work builds on frameworks in political

consumerism and digital media studies (Magnus Boström, *Oxford Handbook of Political Consumerism*, 2019; Mark Stoddart et al., "Instagram as an Arena of Climate Change Communication and Mobilization: A Discourse Network Analysis of COP26," *Environmental Communication*, 2025).

If greenwashing dominates the conversation, we risk replacing action with appearance. Worse, we risk eroding public trust in environmentalism altogether. That's why understanding these narratives, how they're crafted, spread, and resisted, is vital for researchers, regulators, and everyday consumers (Wickert & Risi, *Corporate Social Responsibility*, 2019).

By peeking behind that curtain, I want to contribute not only to the academic field of environmental sociology but also to a broader cultural literacy that empowers us to tell the difference between sustainability as a value and sustainability as a vibe.

Sustainability has become a buzzword in policy documents, university classrooms, and our daily digital scrolls in recent years. Brands large and small now compete for our attention by wrapping their products in green hues, ethical slogans, and recycled narratives. The language of sustainability is everywhere, but its meaning is increasingly diluted. In digital spaces like Instagram and TikTok, where attention is currency and visuals are everything, it's not surprising that many companies have adopted aesthetic strategies to appear environmentally conscious without making substantive changes.

Thanks to social media, which has democratized communication, anyone with a smartphone can now participate in public discourse. However, it has also reduced complicated topics to hashtags and soundbites. Environmental responsibility is frequently reduced to symbolic actions in this context, such as publishing an image of a reusable cup, starting a "green" clothing line, or emblazoning a leafy logo on a product label. Even though these performances are visually striking, they might not take much action to address the structural causes of environmental degradation.

The images are captivating. According to Yan Chen et al. (2023), pictures on social media sites like Instagram serve as decorative and ideological messengers. Not only does a model carrying a compostable bag or a picture of a tranquil mountainside sell a product, but it also conveys a sense of virtue, a moment of being "on the right side" of environmental issues, and a

feeling. This emotional and aesthetic appeal is what makes greenwashing so effective and, at the same time, so difficult to regulate or debunk.

Yet, amid this aesthetic noise, users are creating counter-narratives. Many digitally savvy consumers now use social media tools to call out misleading environmental claims. Hashtag hijacking, duets and stitches on TikTok, and critical reviews have all emerged as grassroots tactics to challenge greenwashing. These forms of "connective action" (Bennett & Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics," *Information, Communication & Society*, 2012) allow users to collectively voice dissent without formal organization or institutional backing.

Crucially, not every user response is hostile. Stuart Hall ("Encoding – Decoding," *Crime and Media: A Reader*, 2019) states that some users participate in "negotiated readings." Although they recognize a brand's environmental efforts, they question their sincerity or scope. One must be aware of this complexity to understand how greenwashing functions online. We shouldn't portray clients as bold or unintelligent because the truth is more complex. Context, culture, platform design, and individual experiences influence audience responses. From a research perspective, new instruments and frameworks are needed to investigate greenwashing in digital spaces. My research draws on qualitative content analysis, visual semiotics, and media ecology to explore what is being said, how it's being said, through which visuals, and in what kinds of interactive environments. This allows me to move beyond the "is it true or false?" binary and ask more profound questions about narrative, power, and meaning.

Ultimately, my goal is not to monitor sustainability messaging. I want to understand the symbolic and aesthetic strategies that shape our view of environmental responsibility. I hope my work adds to a larger discussion about what real corporate responsibility should look like in a digital age. I also want to explore how digital citizens can learn to interpret what lies beneath the hashtags.

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## Sociology and Criminology in 2024-25

By **John McLevey**

The Department of Sociology experienced significant transition in the 2024–25 academic year. **Judith Adler** retired after a remarkable 52-year career at Memorial. **Lisa-Jo van den Scott** was promoted to Professor, **Daniel Kudla** was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor, **Jessica Templeman** joined the department as a tenure-track Assistant Professor. I joined the department as Professor in December 2024 and began my role as Head in January 2025. Several faculty members were also on leave or serving in senior roles beyond the department.

Against this backdrop of change, the department remained deeply active in research, graduate training, teaching, and public engagement. What follows is a summary of faculty awards and recognition, graduate student milestones, and some examples of our research-related work in 2024-25.

### Awards and Recognition

Faculty received several major honours in 2024-25 in recognition of their research, teaching, and community leadership. **Eric Tenkorang** was named a Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honours for scholars contributing to research and development on the African continent and was also recognized as an Economic Justice Champion by the Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment for his research on gender-based violence. **Ailsa Craig** received the 2025 Circle of Distinction Award for Social Justice and Advocacy from YWCA St. John's and was recognized as a Centennial 100 Champion at Memorial University. **Adrienne Peters** received the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence in the tenured and tenure-track category. **Lisa-Jo van den Scott** received an Honourable Mention for the Canadian Sociological Association's Book Award for *Walled-In*.

### Graduate Student Milestones

Four students completed their doctoral degrees. **Yixi Yang** defended "Digitally Networked Public Participation and Climate Change Discourse: A Study of Climate Communication in China." **Kim Phillips** defended "Autonomous Women: An Examination of the Lives and Experiences of Childfree, Never Married Single Women of Color from a Decolonial Feminist Perspective." **Heather Dicks** defended "Pandemic Remittances: Transnational Exchanges Before and During COVID-19." **Judy Muchiri** completed "Gender,

Power, and Participation: Young Women in Kenya's Civic Space."

Three students completed MA theses, one completed an M.Phil, and three completed Major Research Papers. **Victor Agyei-Yeboah** defended "Lineage Norms and Intimate Partner Violence in Ghana: A Qualitative Exploration." **Laura Funke** completed "Thirteen Years of Change? Exploring the Climate Change Debate on Reddit through Topic Modeling." **Ashiqul Khan** defended "Acculturation Experiences in Newfoundland: A Case Study among Bangladeshi Immigrants." **Alison Foster** completed "Epistemology and the Study of Psychedelics" (M.Phil, Humanities). **Meghan Fillier**, **Brad Cooper**, and **Shantambi Wamunyima** each completed their MRPs.

**Susan Goli**, **Sanaz Labbaf**, and **Wasifa Shamma** passed their comprehensive examinations and advanced to PhD candidacy.

### Research and Publications

Faculty and students published widely in 2024-25, including journal articles, books, book chapters, and special issues across sociology, criminology, and interdisciplinary fields. In total, the department produced 19 peer-reviewed journal articles, 18 chapters in edited volumes, and four guest-edited special issues.

Faculty members published five books. **Lisa-Jo van den Scott** published *Walled-In: Arctic Housing and a Sociology of Walls* (Bloomsbury), which received an Honourable Mention for the Canadian Sociological Association's 2025 Book Award. **Patrick Gamsby** published *The Dialectic of Herbert Marcuse* (Bloomsbury) and *Henri Lefebvre, Metaphilosophy, and Modernity* (Routledge), and his fifth book, *The Academic Library and Critical Theory: Unpacking the Library with the Frankfurt School*, is under contract with Routledge. **Rochelle Côté** co-edited the *Handbook on Inequality and Social Capital* (Edward Elgar) with Stephen McDonald and Jing Shen. **Mark Stoddart** co-edited *Contested Consultations in the Extractive Industries* (Routledge) with **Paul Haslam**, **Nathan Andrews**, **Karin Buhmann**, and **Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu**, and has a forthcoming co-authored book, *Understanding Environmental Sociology* (Edward Elgar).

**Eric Tenkorang** published articles in *Sociological Inquiry*, *AIDS*, *Sociological Spectrum*, *Social Currents*,

*Journal of Gender-based Violence*, and *Population Studies*, and contributed two chapters to edited volumes. **Dan Kudla** published articles in *Cities*, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, and *Social & Cultural Geography*; and co-authored a book chapter with **Allyson Stokes** and PhD student **Bruna de Souza Brito**. **Patrick Gamsby** contributed a chapter to *The Anthem Companion to Henri Lefebvre*.

**Mark Stoddart** published articles in *Environmental Communication*, *Maritime Studies*, and *Island Studies Journal*; and chapters in the *Handbook of Social Networks and the Environment*, the *Routledge International Handbook on Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, and *Reimagining Resources and Community Development: Lessons from Newfoundland and Labrador*.

**Jessica Templeman** published an article in the *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* on legal authority, sentencing; and deportation, and co-authored a chapter in *Perversions in Anti-Trafficking*, with another under final revision for *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Immigration Law*. **Adrienne Peters** published an article in *Neurodiversity* on Canadian public perceptions of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and a chapter in *Youth Justice: A Canadian Overview* (4th edition, Oxford University Press). **Nicole Power** published in *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*; and in *Kula: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination and Preservation* on labour, occupational health and open-access publishing; and co-edited special issues of *Coastal Studies & Society* and *New Solutions*.

**Lisa-Jo van den Scott** co-authored "Sing a Song for Home: How Displaced Iranian Song-Writers in LA Conceive of Home and Homeland" in *Qualitative Sociology Review* with PhD student **Pouya Morshedi**, and "Symbolic Interaction as Resistance to Positivism" in the *Elgar Handbook of Interpretive Research Methods* with **Foroogh Mohammadi** (now Assistant Professor at Acadia University). **Rochelle Côté** co-authored "Unpacking Urban Indigenous Social Mobility" in *Business and Society* and published in the *Dilin Duwa Ochre Paper Series*. **John Peters** contributed two chapters, including "Climate Jobs New York: A Labour-led Climate Coalition," and co-edited a special issue of *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*. **Scott Kenney** published "Illegitimate Pain and Ideology" in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. **Lori Lee**

**Oates** guest-edited a special section on Gender and Climate Justice in *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, & Social Justice* with Sritama Chatterjee, including an introduction and an interview with Camelia Dewan.

This work was supported by 44 active research grants in 2024–25, including 21 held by members of the department as principal investigators. Faculty continue to be especially successful with SSHRC, holding Insight, Insight Development, Connection, Partnership, and Knowledge Synthesis grants across a wide range of projects.

### Public Engagement

Faculty brought their research to broader publics through media, public writing, and expert testimony. **Lori Lee Oates** was particularly active, publishing a series of widely-read pieces on the resource curse and energy policy for the *Network in Canadian History and Environment*, writing on provincial energy politics for *The Independent*, appearing on CBC NL's "The Signal;" and testifying as an expert witness before the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources on the Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry. **Dan Kudla's** research on housing and homelessness reached broad audiences through *The Conversation*, *The Independent*, CBC, and the popular podcast 99% Invisible. **Mark Stoddart** worked with Doig River Chief and Council on climate transitions and co-authored a piece in the *Vancouver Sun* on Arctic sustainability. **Eric Tenkorang** contributed to *The Conversation*. Many faculty members, including **Allyson Stokes**, **John Peters**, and **Adrienne Peters**, contributed and gave interviews with CBC.

**Undergraduate Courses and Criminology Curriculum Renewal.** Alongside ongoing teaching responsibilities, the department undertook a comprehensive curriculum renewal project in 2024-25. Working throughout most of the year, we conducted a full review of all four criminology programs, led by **John McLevey**, **Adrienne Peters**, and **Dan Kudla**, with extensive consultation. At the same time, we made collective decisions about our departmental course roster and how best to integrate teaching across both sociology and criminology. The result was a package of over 100 calendar changes, including 17 new courses developed, 36 inactive courses removed, 12 substantially amended, and 12 with minor amendments. These changes will take effect in Fall 2026. It was a busy year!

## Poems

By **Gilbert Foster**

Sociologist Gilbert Foster used to display his recent poems on the door of his Memorial University office. For some of us, Foster's claim to fame was that he was a neighbor in North Tawton, Devon of the celebrated poet Sylvia Plath. Both she and her husband, poet Ted Hughes, lived with their children, at a house called Court Green in 1961 and then Plath and the children alone in 1962. Gilbert helped care for her cats, Skunky-Bunks and Tiger-Pieker, expecting that she would return in the summer. The experience of the PhD student Maeve O'Brien was that Court Green was not romantic, not a rural idyll. It was huge, cold, damp, and scary. Remnants of a historic motte were located near her home. Coming up the driveway to the house, visitors saw only one prominent window. Others were small and partially hidden by shrubbery.

Foster's academic career began with the position of lecturer in modern history at the University of Hull (1949 to 1958). Then, he became a tutor in the extramural department at the University of Exeter (1958 to 1965). He justified his evolving interests by saying that at Exeter he had been hired to teach local history but because of the scarcity of information about a remote area, he had "graduated" to the sociological study of rural life in Devon.

Here are two poems and a fragment of a third by Gilbert Foster (1920-2000). The first poem, dated March 23, 1987, is about the death at sea of Mary Nemeč's brother Michael and his son George near Cape Pine, Newfoundland, on March 16 that year.

Mike was the lighthouse and fog alarm keeper there. "For Sylvia Plath" was written in 1963.

sky and the sea understand all things  
but do not need to tell us what they know  
we stand on their edges, walk to and fro  
listen, worsen and remember  
in summer heat and autumn, winter snow  
under sky, high, and the sea's contemptuous  
voices  
May's way through August until November  
blundering, pondering, wondering: "who told  
you so?"  
in the face of grace, the wise, and all advices.

*For Sylvia Plath*

this is a season for dying:  
now your one-eyed house regards no more  
children  
Valletort's motte, just, and the shabby green  
no point in waiting here for summer's Court  
silence: the bell-pull and the giggling bell.

*Research Proposal*

fish up the bobbing stars out of the sky  
on a cod-jigging hook  
carve up the mighty white-ice pie  
with a flipper or fluke ...  
off to dance around France  
or at Withycombe Fair  
till ... we shoot back to we  
just to plot what's left to see  
or do through what's new in this neck o' the  
woods  
there's nothing so off-putting watching nature  
– besides, being wise, we fear and hate her.



MUN faculty members and students participating in the 2025 annual meeting in Toronto of the Canadian Sociological Association:

Standing from left to right: Foroogh Mohammadi, Pouya Morshedi, Lauren Slade, Susan Goli, Mark Stoddart, Liam Swiss, Lori Lee Oates, Daniel Kudla, Ashiq Khan.

Sitting from left to right: Fatemeh Zahmatkesh, Shayan Morshedi, Joseph Oyedele, Lisa Kaida, Sanaz Labbaf, Wasifa Tasnim Shamma.

Photograph by Stephen Harold Riggins.