

Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Program Launches This Fall

Race and ethnicity are foundational social structures that influence nearly every process we engage in as humans. They shape our social lives as individuals, such as whom we choose to date, as well as internationally contentious social issues, such as police violence and social protest movements. Race and ethnicity influence life expectancies, the participation of nation-states in the world system, and population flows across the globe.

In order to prepare students to understand critically the issues of race and ethnicity in the 21st century, we have developed a new area within the Department of Sociology at both undergraduate and graduate levels of study – Critical Race and Ethnic Studies.

Launching fall 2017, students will investigate through a critical and historical lens how racial and ethnic categories coalesce around structural inequalities and across multiple geographies. This focus will enable our students to demystify the claims of dominant groups about race and ethnicity and to understand overarching themes of social stratification, harm, and humanity.

To kick off this new concentration, we hosted a New Directions in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies conference April 27-29, 2017, on the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Attended by more than 200 people from across the country, the conference was by all accounts a huge success.

Sessions highlighted topics such as intersectionality, whiteness, criminal injustice, environmental racism, resistance and racial justice organizing, immigration, global racism, and many more. Luminaries in the field of critical race studies including Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Mary Romero, Tanya Golash-Boza, Joyce Bell, Wendy Leo Moore, David Embric, and Glenn Bracey gave insightful and powerful keynote presentations on the theoretical innovations and political praxis needed to move critical race studies forward and pursue social justice in a time of political uncertainty.

Serena Sebring from Southerners on New Ground, Amelia Parker from Black Lives Matter Knoxville-Peace Brigades International, and Mónica Hernandez of the Southeast Immigrant Rights Network closed out the last day of the conference with a call for intersectional racial justice organizing linking universities, communities, and activists together in the common pursuit of collective social justice.

Special thanks to the conference organizing committee: faculty members Stephanie Bohon, Michelle Christian, Robert Durán, Asafa Jalata, Victor Ray, and Louise Seamster; and graduate and undergraduate student volunteers, especially Bethany Nelson and Holly Ningard. Jon Shefner, our department head, provided unwavering support.

University sponsors included the College of Arts and Sciences; Office of the Provost; College of Education, Health, and Human Services; the Africana Studies program; the Departments of Psychology, Political Science, and Anthropology; the College of Law; Ready for the World; and the Global Studies program.

sociology.utk.edu/criticalrace



Message from Department Head



Hello, and welcome to a new edition of *Movement*. Many thanks to Lo Presser, professor and associate head of the department, who keeps us all in touch with this newsletter.

UT sociology continues to thrive, innovate, and make a difference in the lives of our students, communities, and UT at large. This year, we have two big changes worth bragging about. Our first big change is welcoming several new faculty to our ranks. Christina Ergas comes to us after a postdoctoral position at Brown University to work in our environmental sociology area. Kasey Henricks joins the department to make important contributions in quantitative methods, and Tyler Wall makes a great addition to our criminology area. Louise Seamster joins us as a postdoctoral instructor, and our PhD alum, Meghan Conley, is working with us in a newly created position as director of community partnerships.

In addition to wonderful and much-needed new faculty, we also begin our new research and teaching area in critical race and ethnic studies. This is the first new area in the Department of Sociology since the 1980s. We kicked it off with a wonderful initiating conference in April of this year.

These big changes come along with our yearly crop of awards and promotions. Michelle Brown, associate professor, and Michelle Christian, assistant professor, co-won the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Support of Diversity. Brown also won the university's Thomas Jefferson Prize, which supports research for a period of three years. Christian also won an NSF/ASA Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline award. The department as a whole won the Dr. Marva Rudolph Diversity and Interculturalism

Unit Excellence Award, a testament to our values and hard work. Graduate student extraordinaire Enkeshi Thom El-Amin won our first NSF Dissertation Improvement Grant. Lisa East, Caitlin Mize, and Enkeshi Thom El-Amin all received Graduate Student Senate Awards for Service. Our front office staff, Nancy Loftis and Shirley Martin, who are the best front office staff at UT, won an award for best teamwork in the College of Arts and Sciences. No less important than all of this, Robert Durán was promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Growth in our undergraduate ranks is also an indication of our excellence as a department.

In 2013, we enrolled 260 majors. Our most recent 2017 majors number is 345. This substantial growth, when sociology enrollments are declining elsewhere across the country, demonstrates that our excellent reputation for teaching and service to undergraduate students continues to grow. We house or advise more and more organizations that serve our students, including Students Who Stand, the sociology honors society Alpha Kappa Delta, the Student Peace Alliance, and Young Democratic Socialists. In addition, we continue to recruit excellent graduate students.

As always, we have a big year in store! We will make a joint hire with Africana Studies, and our mid-cycle program review is this year. We anticipate great results from both of those efforts. As always, we'd love to hear from you. What are you doing? Let us know – drop us a line! Stay in touch!

- JON SHEFNER
Professor and Head
Department of Sociology

Graduate Student Spotlight: **Enkeshi Thom El-Amin**

Exploring Race and Place

Enkeshi Thom El-Amin is one of sociology's rising stars. A fifth-year doctoral student in sociology at UT, Enkeshi has received numerous accolades and highly competitive grants. Honors include a citation for extraordinary campus leadership and service from UT, an award for outstanding achievement in service from the UT Graduate Student Senate, and an Outstanding Research award from the Department of Sociology. She is the recipient of a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Award, a Penley-Thomas Graduate Fellowship, and a Dr. Wanda Rushing Sociological Research Excellence Award, all to facilitate her research on intersections of race, place, identity, and economy.

Enkeshi's dissertation examines how African-Americans experience life in Knoxville, which has her investigating the nature of a culture that combines elements of both the South and Appalachia.

"Shortly after moving to Knoxville, I realized Knoxville didn't feel like the South I had known growing up in Atlanta," Enkeshi says. "I could sense a difference in the culture and was curious about the racial dynamics of the city."

Enkeshi is completing the fieldwork component of her research, having conducted, to date, more than 20 in-depth interviews with native and long-term African-American residents of Knoxville. Later this year she will supplement the interviews with archival research to learn more about African-American history in East Tennessee.

"My hope is that my dissertation can give a voice to a Black Appalachian community and contribute to the recent inquiry into Afrolachian studies, which seeks to claim a space within Appalachia for African Americans," Enkeshi says.

"I hope to raise awareness of the issues that may affect Black communities throughout Appalachia so that policymakers, governmental organizations, and non-governmental actors who create and implement services and programs for Appalachian people can do so in a culturally competent manner."

When Enkeshi reflects on her time within the department, the strong relationships she has with faculty members come foremost to her mind. Her dissertation advisor, Michelle Christian, is steadfast in her encouragement and an ideal intellectual sounding board. Victor Ray has contributed important insights from the sociology of race.



Despite a change of research focus, Enkeshi says she "hasn't been willing to give up" Paul Gellert, who remains on her dissertation committee.

"The sociology program at UT is a perfect program for my research interests," Enkeshi says. "Even though the focus of my research shifted once I got to Knoxville and began to grapple with questions of race and place, this program is still the best fit for me."

Undergraduate Student Spotlight: **Lauren Kataja**



Expanding Food Access and Security

A desire to help people nourish themselves drives Lauren Kataja. It first led her to sociology three years ago, then to her sociology honors thesis project examining the promise and problems of food assistance programs in the United States.

Lauren honed her understanding of food access, inequality, and public policy in UT sociology classes such as Food, Agriculture, & Society; Sociological Theory; and Comparative Poverty & Development. In the sociological research class she took with Louise Seamster, Lauren developed an ambitious research proposal titled “An Analysis of Methodology of Studies on Food Security: Comparing Developed and Developing Country’s Policies and Procedures.”

Lauren praises sociology professors, including her thesis advisor Sherry Cable, graduate teaching associate Joel Crombez, Paul Gellert, and Louise Seamster, for an excellent undergraduate education that will come to a close when she graduates in December 2017.

A native of Concord, North Carolina, Lauren has grown to love the Knoxville area and hopes to return one day. These days she is reading a trove of academic papers and books for her thesis research and studying for the GRE with the goal of earning a Master’s of Public Administration.

Lauren has considered the value of sociology at UT. The concentration in Environmental Issues & Globalization within the major matched her interests perfectly, and then broadened her perspective.

“The sociology professors are geared toward your learning and reacting to what you’ve learned, appreciating its role in your day-to-day life,” Lauren says. “I have grown so much in my years here.”

Stay in Touch

As associate director of undergraduate studies in the department, I need **YOU**, undergraduate alumni! I’m collecting information on your job experiences and/or graduate studies since you graduated from UT. I’ll use the data to compile a list of jobs for general departmental purposes and, more significantly, for advising undergraduates about the job market. I want to know, wherever you’re working. Seriously - it’s important information. So please, as soon as you can, email me the information listed at scable@utk.edu. And **THANK YOU!**

- Professor Sherry Cable

Name (you don’t really have to give me your name, but I’m sure faculty would love to know what you’re up to).

Year of graduation.

Advisor (if you remember).

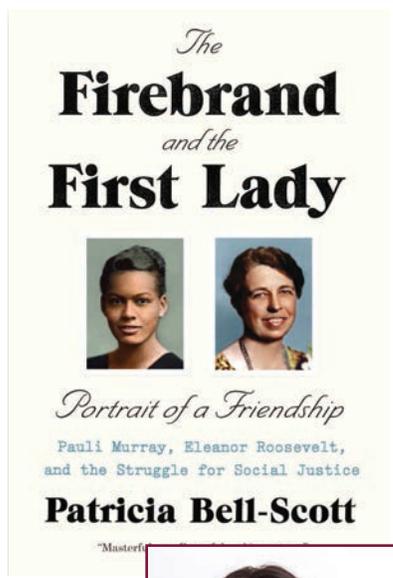
Concentration (if you completed one).

If graduate program: where, in what, and how long?
1st job, 2nd job, 3rd job, etc., after graduation

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Patricia Bell-Scott

Written by Wanda Rushing, Distinguished Alumna in Sociology



The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship is a national best-selling biography of a friendship between Pauli Murray and Eleanor Roosevelt. Author Patricia Bell-Scott, a University of Tennessee, Knoxville alum, earned her BA in sociology, and MA and PhD degrees in Child and Family Studies.

Now Professor Emerita of Women's Studies and Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia, Bell-Scott spent the last 18 months on a book tour. Motivated by her own scholarship on family, gender, and women's studies, and encouraged by her own brief correspondence with Pauli Murray many years ago, Bell-Scott spent 20 years researching and writing the book.

Carefully placing this "portrait of a friendship" in historical context, Bell-Scott documents the decades-long friendship as it grew slowly and evolved, changing both Pauli Murray and Eleanor Roosevelt.

"They were brutally honest, willing to be vulnerable with each other, and did not exclude difficult dialogue," Bell-Scott says.

When Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman of privilege, became First Lady, she expressed views at the political center. Responding to Pauli Murray's letters, Roosevelt first dubbed Pauli Murray a firebrand and urged patience to the young woman activist who challenged racial segregation and gender discrimination in her writing and activism. As their political views moved toward each other, Eleanor Roosevelt violated segregation laws and supported young student activists.

"Pauli Murray was one of the people who helped pull her in that direction," Bell-Scott says. "She wasn't born that way."

Later in life, Pauli Murray became more willing to work within mainstream institutional hierarchy.

Bell-Scott identifies writing, friendship, and understanding history as key themes in the lives of Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and in her own life experience. As an undergraduate student at UT in the 1960s,

Bell-Scott benefitted from sociology courses in social movements and urban sociology, and the encouragement of Department Head William Cole. Seeking knowledge about family, gender, and women's narratives, she pursued graduate work in Child and Family Studies and began her faculty career at UT. As a student in Knoxville, she became friends with students from different backgrounds, and her friendship with one student, Patrick C. McKenry, who became a professor at Ohio State, lasted until his death a few years before she completed the book. Their lifelong friendship between a very different young white man and a young black woman helped her understand how Eleanor Roosevelt and Pauli Murray viewed each other.

The Firebrand and the First Lady spotlights Pauli Murray, a feminist, writer, social activist, legal theorist, and Episcopal priest.

"We can learn a lot from her dogged persistence," says Bell-Scott, whose book supports and coincides with current efforts to acknowledge the contributions of Pauli Murray.

Yale University recently named a new residential college after Murray, who was the first African American to earn a doctorate of jurisprudence from Yale. The Department of the Interior designated her childhood home in Durham, North Carolina, a National Historic Landmark. Law conferences are being hosted in Murray's honor in New York and in Washington, DC.

Bell-Scott's book received the 2017 Lillian Smith Book Award. It is under consideration for stage and screen adaptations and was part of a multimedia presentation and performance by the Brooklyn Youth Choir in May. Bell-Scott, however, is modest about her achievement.

"I am happy to see Pauli Murray finally get the attention she deserves."

Jason Houser: Commitment and Focus



Jason Houser is a proud native of Appalachia and cares deeply for the culture, communities, and land he calls home. In 1999, his community of Parkersburg, West Virginia, entered the national spotlight when an environmental lawyer filed a federal suit against DuPont.

“Before I came to UT, my community was hurt dramatically by the effects of chemical pollution in the water supply by the DuPont Corporation,” Houser says. “That issue defined my thinking and focus at UT.”

Houser sought out the sociology program at UT and focused on society and the environment. In addition to his love of Appalachia, he was also concerned about the effects environmental degradation has had on Appalachian communities across the decades.

“The program gave me a tremendous understanding of the global impacts environmental policy plays on communities, society, and our security,” Houser says.

Another defining moment for Houser occurred September 11, 2001. He was walking through the Student Union on his way to a social movement and collective behavior course when the attacks occurred.

“That moment is seared into my mind to this day. It was an extremely dramatic experience that began to reshape my focus to national security issues, public policy, and politics,” Houser says. “The attacks on 9/11 defined my work and professional commitment to my country.”

After graduating from UT, Houser pursued a Public Policy Masters at George Mason University and studied Arabic within the intelligence community. The Navy commissioned him as an Intelligence Officer and for the past 15 years, Houser has worked in politics, policy, and national security.

Houser currently serves as a senior foreign engagement officer for United States Cyber Command and as a counterterrorism, intelligence, and emergency management subject-matter-expert for Argonne National Laboratory. He is also an adjunct professor at Arizona State University where he teaches courses about domestic terrorism.

The sociology courses Houser took while at UT helped lay the foundation for the person he is today.

“My work in the international system courses I took with Professor Asafa Jalata shaped the way I conceptualized global problems and solutions,” Houser says. “It has guided me a great deal in my work in public policy.”

Russell Dynes: Pioneer in the Sociology of Disasters

Russell R. Dynes began his sociology studies at age 16 when he entered UT as an undergraduate. A couple of years later World War II began, and Dynes joined the reserves. He was called up, along with several other UT students, and spent two years abroad before returning to UT to finish his bachelor’s degree.

“My interest in sociology stems from a response to all the social change and cultural differences I witnessed,” says Dynes, professor emeritus of sociology.



Kathy F. Atkinson, University of Delaware

Dynes made his mark in the field of sociology as a pioneer in a new area of study – the social science of disasters. In 1963, he helped establish the Disaster Research Center at Ohio State University, which later moved to the University of Delaware.

During his distinguished career, Dynes chaired the Committee on International Disaster Assistance, National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council from 1976 to 1979. He served as head of the Task Force on Emergency Preparedness and Response for the President’s Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island in 1979.

He has been a Fulbright lecturer in Egypt, India, and Thailand, as well as a visiting professor at University College, Cardiff. Professor Dynes is the author or editor of 10 books and well over 100 articles, many on disaster related topics.

Introducing Our Newest Faculty



MEGHAN CONLEY

joined us in January and provides a new bridge to the Knoxville community as our director of community partnerships. Meghan, who earned her PhD in sociology at UT in 2013, helps organize and develop collaborations between the department, UT at large, and organizations in the greater Knoxville area. Her long-term goal is to help community groups use sociological knowledge and research methods to address critical issues and to facilitate community-based research opportunities to serve the department's social justice mission.



CHRISTINA ERGAS

comes to us from Brown University where she was a postdoctoral fellow in the Superfund Research Program from 2016-2017. Prior to that, Christina earned her PhD in sociology at the University of Oregon in 2013. She conducts community-based participatory research with environmental organizations to assess environmental risk awareness. Other research areas include social inequalities, environmental justice, urbanization, and food.



KASEY HENRICKS

is a sociologist and sociological scholar by training. He completed his PhD at Loyola University Chicago. He joins the faculty as an assistant professor in the area of research methods. Kasey's research focus is understanding how racial inequalities are reproduced over time through institutional arrangements sponsored by tax policy. His goal is to develop a concept of bureaucratic violence, looking at how police, city managers, judges, and others work in quiet, invisible ways to administer the racial order.



LOUISE SEAMSTER

comes to us from Duke University, where she received her PhD in 2016. Her research focuses on new mechanisms of discrimination and marginalization in a supposedly "post-racial" society. Her work crosses a wide range of domains and topics. She is developing her dissertation field research on emergency management and urban redevelopment into a book manuscript focusing on the white people trying to "bring back" the majority-black city of Benton Harbor, Michigan.



TYLER WALL joins us from the School of Justice Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. He received his PhD from the School of Justice and Social Inquiry at Arizona State University

in 2009. Wall completed a one-year postdoctoral fellowship at Vanderbilt University in the Department of Human and Organizational Development and served as a visiting assistant professor at Indiana University-Southeast. His main research and theoretical interests focus on the political and cultural dynamics of racialized state violence and security politics, with a specific focus on police and pacification.



To read more about our outstanding faculty, please visit us online.

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Department of Sociology
901 McClung Tower
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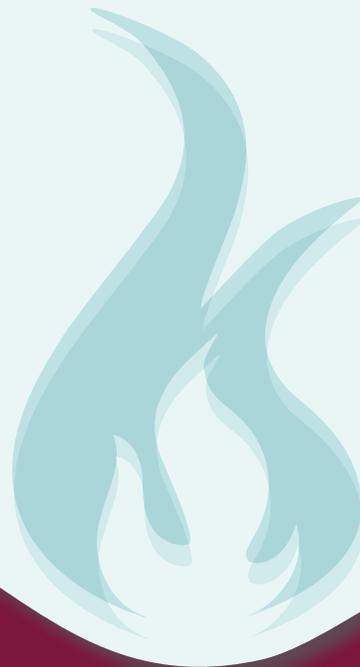
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Will you help us carry the torch of justice?

We have several opportunities for supporting social justice and the Department of Sociology. Whether \$1 or \$1 million, your donation will provide support to the faculty, students, and staff in the Department of Sociology at UT.

- **Sociology Development Endowment**
- **William E. Cole Scholarship**
- **Cole-Franklin Scholarships for Graduate Students**
- **Gertrude Garner Hurlbut Scholarship**
- **Dr. Donald "Chip" Hastings Endowed Scholarship**
- **Dr. Wanda Rushing Sociological Research Excellence Award**
- **The Shefner Undergraduate and Graduate Student Account**



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