New Institutes Enhance Social Sciences Scholarship

The creation of an institute at the University of Chicago represents a significant commitment to support an area of exceptional promise. Two new institutes created this year, to support interdisciplinary research in education and economics, will be led by faculty in the Social Sciences Division.

Last spring, President Zimmer announced the establishment of the Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics to support and further research by scholars in the Department of Economics, along with the Graduate School of Business and the Law School. “The Institute,” he said, “is designed to reinforce the University of Chicago as the world’s leading intellectual destination for economics and its connections to business, law, and policy.”

The Institute is named for Milton Friedman, AM’33, who taught at Chicago for a significant portion of his academic career and is considered by many to be the leading economist of the 20th century. It will provide resources for University faculty and visiting scholars to engage in research endeavors that cross and transcend traditional academic boundaries. “We see the Friedman Institute as a means to encourage interaction across some of the best and most exciting areas of research in economics and related disciplines,” said Lars Hansen, chairman of the faculty committee that developed a proposal for the Friedman Institute, and the Homer J. Livingston Distinguished Service Professor in Economics. “It will give us a way to continue to learn about the best new research in a variety of areas and to seek cross-fertilization among important subfields of economics.”

Hansen further noted that visiting scholars and extended workshops will play a crucial role in the center’s intellectual vitality. The Friedman Institute “will help us break down intellectual barriers by giving experts the support required to run workshops during extended visits and to recruit complementary younger visitors,” he said. “Thematic workshops over extended periods of time will allow us and our colleagues to explore potential synergies through repeated dialogue and exposure to promising lines of research.”

The Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics will occupy buildings purchased from the Chicago Theologo...
The Institute will work with the Committee on Education. Meanwhile, the Urban Education Institute, also announced this spring, integrates four University programs that focus on improving urban education at the pre-K–12 levels: the University of Chicago Charter School, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the Urban Teacher Education Program, and the Center for Urban School Improvement. The Social Sciences Division will play a pivotal role in the Urban Education Institute’s development and expansion, particularly through the Committee on Education, an academic unit dedicated to multidisciplinary scholarship in education. The Committee is composed of ten faculty members and chaired by Stephen W. Raudenbush, the Lewis-Sebring Distinguished Service Professor in Sociology. Through its research initiatives, the Committee will help UEI develop the Chicago Model for Urban Schooling, a set of protocols and standards of practice for urban education. “The Institute will work with the Committee on Education in a unique partnership between practitioners and scholars,” said Raudenbush. “The goal is to create new knowledge about how to provide excellent schooling for urban youth. This is one of the most urgent questions facing the nation and no university is more determined than the University of Chicago to find answers.”

As the Division’s scholars continue to engage in pioneering, multidisciplinary research with far-reaching implications for the academy and beyond, the Urban Education Institute and the Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics will provide them with vital resources and support. Commenting on the new institutes, Dean of the Social Sciences Division Mark Hansen said, “The Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics, we hope, will mean that the most influential economics faculty of the 20th century is also the most influential in the 21st. The University’s work in pre-K–12 education is some of the most exciting and most important in the country, and the Urban Education Institute is a material step forward in the evolution of our engagement.”

Report from the Dean

Among the many exciting plans the University is now advancing, the Graduate Aid Initiative is both the first and the most welcome for the Social Sciences Division. The president’s program has enabled us to increase fellowship support to a level that is competitive with our peers. Thus the social sciences benefit by continuing to attract students of outstanding scholarly promise, and our doctoral students benefit from being able to devote themselves more fully to their studies. As an aspect of the Graduate Aid Initiative that has been less discussed is the continuation of the University’s commitment to doctoral programs that are large compared to our peers’. The “critical mass” size of our graduate programs is central to the experience of both faculty and students in the Social Sciences Division. The faculty counts our substantial doctoral programs as an important factor in their desire to come to Chicago and stay here. They say that the presence of a sizable number of graduate students is a significant reason for the uniquely serious and intense intellectual environment in the University. They appreciate the ability to reach an intellectual critical mass in graduate seminars and specialized research fields. They acknowledge the difficulties in identifying special scholarly talent ex ante, on the basis of a record in college, and pride themselves on recruiting students who have demonstrated promise and enabled them to become major figures in their fields.

The critical mass in the doctoral programs has also been central to the experience of students. Most immediately, students profit from the quality of faculty who are attracted to Chicago by our graduate focus. Moreover, like the faculty, they benefit from the distinctive character of our programs, which comes from their size—from the intellectual intensity, from critical mass, and from the opportunity to pursue a career as a scholar. In my experience as dean, there are few benefits of large doctoral programs—such as the opportunity to pursue a dissertation at a major research university—does not go unappreciated. Time and again I meet alumni who took a chance on themselves at Chicago and turned the opportunity into an important and rewarding career as a leader in the academy, in government, in journalism, in business, or in myriad other interesting endeavors.

As we look ahead, we face an estimable challenge: to keep pace with our competition while still maintaining our size, our intellectual intensity, and our commitment to opportunity. To meet it, we will need your continuing attention and support. All of us, I know, faculty, students, and alumni alike, are dedicated to maintaining all that is distinctive and special about the University of Chicago for the benefit of generations still to come.

John Mark Hansen, Dean
Spotlight on African Studies

The University of Chicago is home to a growing cadre of accomplished Africanist scholars working in academic departments across the Social Sciences Division and the University. Although Africanists at Chicago are now flourishing, it wasn’t until the 1960s that institutions of higher learning in America and Europe even recognized African Studies as an autonomous field with relevance to a number of traditional academic disciplines. During the field’s fledgling years, the University of Chicago was a key player in its development and expansion, thanks to the contributions of several prominent scholars.

To illustrate this impact, Africanist faculty point to the highly influential work of Ralph Austen, professor emeritus of African history, Jean Comaroff, Bernard E. & Ellen C. Dusenbury Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology and of Social Sciences in the College; and John Comaroff, Harold H. Swift Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology and of Social Sciences in the College. Rachel Jean-Baptiste, assistant professor of African history, credits Austen with contributing pathbreaking research that illuminates the social and economic history of West Africa. Likewise, she notes the Comaroffs’ canonical status within the field: “No matter what discipline of African Studies, any reading list would include a text by Jean or John.”

Long-standing collaboration between Austen and the Comaroffs has helped cultivate the cooperative, interdisciplinary spirit of African Studies at Chicago, says Jennifer Cole, associate professor in the Department of Comparative Human Development: “It’s always been interdisciplinary between anthropology and history here because of the collaboration between John and Jean Comaroff on one hand and Ralph Austen on the other.” Cole specifically notes that Austen and the Comaroffs ran the University’s African Studies Workshop together for many years.

And scholars like Austen and the Comaroffs have mentored numerous graduate students who are now influential scholars in their own right. François Richard, assistant professor of anthropology, says this “is perhaps one of the most important dimensions of African Studies at the U of C: the legacy does not stop with accomplished scholars. Indeed, Africanists on campus... are very invested in working with students, and developing tight, collegial collaborations with them.”

Current scholarly and popular interest in Africa and a wave of new hires make this an especially exciting time at Chicago for established and emerging scholars alike. While this interest may seem like a new development, Africa has always been of prime importance to anthropologists. Across the broader social sciences, interest in African Studies has ebbed and flowed over the years, says Africanists in the Division. When the field of African history was first established in the sixties, it enjoyed an initial surge of popularity, says Jean-Baptiste: “That so much about the African past was ‘unknown’ and that many countries on the continent faced some significant economic, political, and social challenges attracted many scholars. Yet I think that civil strife, state corruption, the idea of AIDS as an African disease, and extreme poverty epitomized by famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s resulted in a sense of ‘Afro-pessimism,’ that Africa was somehow a lost continent.”

According to Chicago Africanists, African Studies regained momentum in the 1990s, corresponding with prominent developments on the continent and an increased popular interest in Africa and responding to a need for rigorous research highlighting the deficiencies of, as Richard puts it, “misguided views of Africa as being the prisoner of hermetic ‘traditions,’ irrational customs, and ‘tribal’ sensibilities.” These scholars stress the importance of research that delves into the intricacies of African history and culture as well as the complex factors underlying the continent’s current problems. “Students often walk in... wanting to go to Africa and be saviors,” says Emily Osborn, assistant professor of African history. “Our role is to show that this is a much more complex place, to historicize these problems and to put them in a broader perspective.”

And in a more general sense, says Richard, those who are seeking to understand the modern world and its development must consider Africa, because the continent has played an integral role in the evolution of geopolitics since the 1500s. “Plainly put, Africa has been a key contributor to the unfolding of world history in the past 500 years, and quite likely before—for instance, African gold helped to support many of the currency systems of Mediterranean, and indirectly, European politics in medieval times.”

Underscoring this relevance, Africanists in the Social Sciences Division engage in multifaceted research that explores Africa’s past and present, illuminating the continent’s significant role in global trends. In describing her historical research, Osborn stresses the importance of Chicago’s collaborative academic culture, mentioning in particular the University’s cross-disciplinary African Studies Workshop. At the workshop, Africanist faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars present their research and receive constructive criticism. “What has been very valuable to me,” says Osborn, “are discussions in the workshop around, for example, neoliberalism in Africa, and the efforts by anthropologists to grapple with what is postcoloniality and what is postcolonial Africa... This perspective has been very important to me in trying to come to terms with and think about the historical processes at work in my own research.”

Africanists throughout the Division echo this sentiment, citing the workshop as a key component of their research endeavors. Cole says that she’s presented several papers at the workshop and has received invaluable input from students and fellow faculty: “It’s one of the very few places where the discussion is interdisciplinary and intergenerational.”

Richard points out that the African Studies Workshop is also student-centered, giving up-and-coming scholars the opportunity to present research and interact with prominent Africanists. He refers to the graduate students who attend the workshops as “lifelong interlocutors and colleagues, who will determine the shape and direction of African Studies in future generations.”

Jean-Baptiste hopes that those future generations will help African Studies at the University of Chicago evolve into “a critical mass of scholars and students.” The program is moving in that direction, with three new faculty hired last year and one this year. At present, Chicago Africanists comprise a small group with modest resources—but, Osborn declares, “what we lack in that, we make up for in intellectual dynamism.”
A Conversation with Friedrich Katz

Friedrich Katz is the Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Latin American History at the University of Chicago and co-director of the Mexican Studies Program, and is widely recognized as one of the most distinguished historians of modern Mexico. His journey toward a life of letters began when the rise of Nazism forced his family to leave Europe and to eventually settle in Mexico City. Katz arrived at the University of Chicago in 1971, where he has taught ever since. His most recent book, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, has won numerous awards, including the Albert J. Beveridge Award from the American Historical Association.

In June 2008, Professor Katz talked with Christopher Boyer, PhD’97, one of his former advisees and now associate professor of history and Latin American and Latino studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

How did your personal history as a refugee from Nazism influence your intellectual trajectory and decision to become a historian?

To a certain degree, my decision to become a historian was influenced by my father, who was a historian and also a writer of fiction who loved especially Jewish history, which he knew very well. And it was obviously influenced by the fact that we lived in so many countries, and then had to leave, which brought me into contact with German, French, American, and Mexican cultures. The variety of that played a role, too. So, the need to find that answer—what happened to me, what happened to my family—was certainly an important factor. And finally, my stay in Mexico provoked my greatest interest in history, being exposed to that civilization—especially coming in 1940, when President Lázaro Cárdenas was still there. The revolution was everywhere except in one place: my school. The reason was that when I was six, we had to escape from Germany. I went to France not knowing a word of French, which was a very had experience. The kids did not think of us as refugees, but as dirty Germans. They beat me up. At the age of 11 we had to leave and came to the United States, where I went to school in New York. Again, I didn’t know a word of English. Still, a few of the kids were very nice. This was on the west side of New York where many were refugees, and they were very friendly. But still, it was a difficult experience not knowing the language.

And then we came to Mexico, and my parents didn’t want me to go through that experience again. So they put me in a French school where we also had Spanish, and that made life easier for me. But that school for the descendents of the Barcelonettes, who were very wealthy merchants in Mexico, had one characteristic: We did learn, we had wonderful teachers, we learned a lot about Europe, and we had three hours of Spanish. There were weeks where we learned about the history and geography of Castile and Aragón. Mexico, however, was never mentioned, and that made me mad. From that point, instead of learning about Mexico through school, I started learning on my own by reading and speaking to people. I think it was far more useful than having certain facts simply thrown at me. I always used to write something for my father’s birthday, and I think at the age of 14 or 16 I wrote an essay on the Mexican Revolution.

After your earliest work on Ancient American Civilizations, much of your scholarship has fallen on the social and political history of Mexico. How did you find a way of integrating your research agenda with having mentored so many young historians?

Well, that is not my accomplishment alone. I was lucky at the University of Chicago to work with three extraordinary persons, John Coarnworth first and Claudio Lomnitz, and later Emilio Kourí. So it was never a one-person affair. It was by the need to have profound social reforms, the people who had fought for democracy, of regional alliances. Mexican peasants were not ignorant rustics; they had frequently been far beyond their villages when they fought the Mexican civil war between conservatives and liberals. So these were people who may not have been able to read and write, but who were not confined to their own villages, who had an inkling of democracy, and who were at least interested in politics at the regional level. So, saying they were not ripe for democracy, I don’t believe that. The problem was that once Madero decided he didn’t want profound social reforms, the people who had fought were getting out of hand, destroying the social fabric, he turned against his erstwhile friends. The first one I doubt because, yes, it’s true most people were illiterate, but there was a profound tradition of local autonomy and local democracy in Mexico. There was also a tradition of regional, let’s call it democracy, of regional alliances. Mexican peasants were not ignorant rustics; they had frequently been far beyond their villages when they fought the Mexican civil war between conservatives and liberals. So these were people who may not have been able to read and write, but who were not confined to their own villages, who had an inkling of democracy, and who were at least interested in politics at the regional level. So, saying they were not ripe for democracy, I don’t believe that. The problem was that once Madero decided he didn’t want profound social reforms, the people who had fought became more and more disillusioned. That was certainly a major factor.

During the 2007 international conference organized by the University of Chicago’s honor.

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Back on Campus for Alumni Weekend 2008

Each June, the University of Chicago invites all alumni back to campus for Alumni Weekend—four days of reunions, celebrations, and, of course, intellectual stimulation!

During Alumni Weekend 2008, the Department of Economics held several events on Friday, June 6, welcoming an enthusiastic group of graduates who socialized with faculty, participated in a workshop led by Sam Kortum, professor in economics and the College, and ended the day by gathering with current students at a special departmental TGIF. While most of the events were held in the department’s new space in Rosenwald Hall, alumni had an opportunity to frequent old haunts in the Social Science Research Building and on the quads. Social Science 122 was an especially popular draw.

The following day, at the 2008 Alumni Convocation in Rockefeller Chapel, two SSD alumni were honored with Alumni Association awards. Larry Sjaastad, AB’59, AM’60, PhD’63, was one of five Chicago graduates to receive a Professional Achievement Citation. A 19-year faculty member at Michigan State University, Sjaastad founded and codirected Michigan State’s Institute for Research on Teaching, and played an instrumental role in faculty development and formulation of the institution’s medical school curriculum. In 1982, Sjaastad joined the Stanford University faculty, and he became the eighth president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching when the foundation moved to Stanford in 1997. Alumni Weekend is a good opportunity to visit campus, meet with old friends, and hear faculty talk about their latest research. We hope to see more Social Sciences alumni here next year, so save the date: Thursday, June 4, 2009.

New Social Sciences Faculty Appointments

This autumn, the Social Sciences Division welcomes seven new faculty members who join six of our eight departments.

Among this group are three new senior faculty and one visiting professor. The Department of Comparative Human Development welcomes Don Kalick, a cultural and social anthropologist who received his PhD from Stockholm in 1990 and previously taught at New York University. His recent publications include Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction and Transcest: Sex, Gender and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes. Developmental psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer, PhD’76, a graduate of human development at Chicago, will return to the University in January as a faculty member in the Department of Comparative Human Development and the Committee on Education. Spencer’s adolescent-focused research addresses resilience, identity, and competence—formation processes in youth of all four ethnicities, but particularly among youth of color and those from low-resource families. Spencer previously held appointments at Emory University and the University of Pennsylvania. Linda Zerilli is a new faculty member in political science and the Center for Gender Studies. A political philosopher and a former Northwestern University faculty member, Zerilli recently published Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom. Finally, John Levi Martin, a social critic, will serve as a visiting professor in the department of Sociology for the 2008-09 academic year. Martin has also taught at Rutgers, UC Berkeley, and UW-Madison.

Joining this roster of senior scholars are four new junior faculty. A cultural anthropologist, Julie Chu taught at Wellesley before starting with the anthropology department this fall. Her book, Cosmologies of Credit: Faithfulness and Migration in the Politics of Distinction, is forthcoming from Duke University Press. The history department welcomes alumnus Cameron Hawkins, AM’00, PhD’06, who previously served as visiting assistant professor in the department. Joining the psychology department is Katherine Kinter, a developmental psychologist who received a University of Chicago Neubauer Family Assistant Professorship. And Cheol-Sung Lee comes to the sociology department from the University of Utah, where he taught for three years.

University Awards for Social Sciences Division Faculty

Last spring, three faculty members of the Social Sciences Division were awarded prestigious University teaching awards. Jessica Cartelino, assistant professor in anthropology and the College, and Andreas Glaser, associate professor in sociology and the College, received the Llewellyn John and Harriet Manchester Quantrell Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. The Quantrell Award, established by Ernest Quantrell in 1938, is presented annually to University faculty in recognition of exemplary undergraduate teaching. This past academic year, Cartelino taught a new undergraduate course titled “Economics of Sex and Gender,” in addition to teaching in the Social Sciences Core. Attesting to the motivation and intellect of her undergraduate students, Cartelino said: “What I like about working with College students is their fearlessness. They are eager to read and learn.” Glaser, who also teaches in the Core, described the excitement of exploring broad issues in social theory with College students. “We look at the big questions in social theory. What is society? What is history?” said Glaser. “It’s a pure joy for me as I get a perspective that is like being 30,000 feet in the air, looking down.”

While Cartelino and Glaser received undergraduate teaching awards, Lisa Wedeen, professor in political science and in the College and chair of the Department of Political Science, received a Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching.
In addition to teaching her regional specialty, the Middle East, Wedeen has taught courses in nations and nationalism, identity formation in comparative perspective, citizenship and membership classes, and power and resistance. In teaching graduate students, Wedeen stresses “the possibilities and pleasure of serendipitous encounters, the commitment to long-term engagement with places and inhabitants, and an abiding attention to what people say and do—as well as an appreciation that what people say is a form of doing in its own right.”

New Master of the Social Sciences Collegiate Division

In June it was announced that Elisabeth Clemens, AM’85, PhD’90, would succeed Constantin Fasolt, Karl J. Weintraub Professor of History and in the College, as master of the Social Sciences Collegiate Division, associate dean of the College, and deputy dean of the Division of Social Sciences. Clemens, who is a professor in the Department of Sociology and in the College, assumed her new duties on July 1, 2008. In addition to teaching her regional specialty, the Middle East, Clemens, who is a professor in the Department of Sociology and in the College, assumed her new duties on July 1, 2008.


Upon the book’s publication, Harris commented, “Library browsing remains an indispensable tool for me. I hope that readers will share my sense of discovery.”

In Memoriam

Daniel G. Freedman, 1927-2008

Daniel G. Freedman, professor emeritus in the Department of Comparative Human Development, died on June 10, 2008. Freedman pioneered the perspective that both biological and evolutionary viewpoints are required for full understanding of human behavior.

Freedman received three degrees in psychology: a BA in 1949 from the University of California, Berkeley; an MA in 1955 from the University of Colorado; and a PhD in 1957 from Brandeis University. After research fellowships, he was named assistant professor of biology at the University of Chicago, a position he held until 1968. He then co-led an observational study of different cultures and environments in conjunction with the International School of America. In 1977, Freedman rejoined the University as a professor of human development. He was also a visiting faculty member at the Australian National University in Canberra, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Institute for Human Development and Social Change in Beijing, China.

Dr. Freedman was a distinguished psychologist whose contributions to child development, behavioral genetics, human ethology, and evolutionary psychology inspired colleagues and students, both in the United States and abroad.” said former student Nancy L. Segal, professor of psychology at California State University, Fullerton. “These multiple perspectives are now being increasingly embraced by researchers in psychology and related fields.”

Coenraad J. Oort, AM’52

Coenraad Oort, an alumnus of the economics department, died in November 2007. His wife, Marianne S. Luys Oort, said of her late husband’s connection and commitment to the Division, “Coenraad enjoyed his years at the U of C where he did his master’s under such eminent scholars as Friedman and Marschak. He continued to support the Division of the Social Sciences throughout the years. We met at the U of C where I was attending the College, so he always had a piece of Chicago close to him.”

Alumni News

Peter Boxall, PhD’86 (Economics), was appointed Secretary of the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism in December 2007 by the newly elected Australian Government. This appointment followed six years as Secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2002-07) and five years as Secretary of the Department of Finance (1997-2002). Peter lives in Canberra, Australia, with his wife, Karen Chester, and their two school-age daughters—one of whom has already expressed interest in studying at Chicago.

Alumni News

If you have news to share with other Social Sciences alumni or comments on Dialogo, please contact Nina B. Herbst in the Office of the Dean, Division of the Social Sciences, at nherbst@uchicago.edu or call on (773) 834-9067.