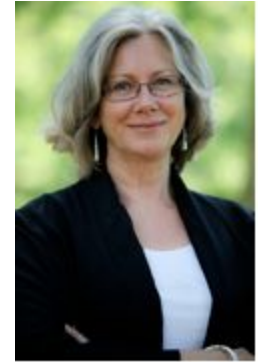




Department of Sociology Notes from the Chair ~ Karen V. Hansen

Greetings from Pearlman Hall!

2017 and the aftermath of the presidential election bring many challenges to Sociology and academia. Indeed, the ideas of the enlightenment appear to be on the table for public negotiation. With this national challenge to democratic institutions comes an elevation of our teaching mission and commitment to cogent analysis of “social facts” (remember when that seemed like a quaint term?) and social structures.



The uncertainty that grips the country has not shaken our mission. It has simply made it clearer: We are here to teach people the tools for critical analyses of institutions and social processes.

To our good fortune, a new Assistant Professor has joined the faculty this fall: Gowri Vijayakumar. She has begun teaching courses in social movements and gender and human rights. She finished her Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley in May, 2016 and has jumped full-throttle into life at Brandeis. Welcome, Gowri!

Throughout the election season, we hosted a variety of talks in the department. Talks illuminated the appeal of Donald Trump (Arlie Hochschild, University of California, Berkeley); explored the policing of public schools (Carla Shedd, Columbia); documented China’s newspaper publishing and the democracy movement’s pivot away from the US model (Ya-Wen Lei, Harvard); examined challenges to inequality in the educational system (Anthony Jack, Harvard); and analyzed inequality in our “tumbleweed society” (Allison Pugh, University of Virginia).

This spring we will say farewell to two retiring faculty. After 37 years at Brandeis, Peter Conrad taught his last class in December. Shula Reinharz, who has devoted the last two decades to developing the Women’s Studies Research Center, will step down from her familiar role. You are invited to join us March 4 for a “Forum on Medical Sociology: The Conrad Way,” engaging Peter’s many intellectual contributions over his career: <http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/sociology/news>. And the WSRC is hosting a semester-long series of talks in honor of Shula: <http://www.brandeis.edu/wsrc/events.html> Having just returned from the Women’s March in Washington, DC, I am acutely aware of the power of connection and collective resistance. Our human (and virtual) networks importantly create and sustain communities of ideas and inspiration and support our ability to survive hard times.

Please stay in touch and let us know what you are doing.

Warm wishes in solidarity,
Karen V. Hansen