

SOCIOLOGY

DOCTORAL PROGRAM



Department of Sociology
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

About the Program

Established in 1924, Michigan State University's Department of Sociology has a long and rich tradition of rigorous research, high-quality teaching, and impactful engagement. We are on the forefront of innovative scholarship that enhances sociological understanding and produces scholars who address major societal challenges.

While we investigate a range of sociological phenomena, our department has substantial strengths in three signature areas: Environment, Health/Medicine, and Migration. MSU sociologists conduct research in Michigan, across the US, and around the world—often collaborating with sociologists and scholars in other disciplines as well as with key stakeholders, such as community members, policy-makers, technical experts, and activists.

Our Doctoral Program attracts candidates from around the world, who regularly go on to distinguished careers in academia, government, civil society, and business. Our Doctoral Program typically has approximately 30 students and regularly ranks in the top 50 sociology PhD programs in the world. Our 23 graduate faculty members work together with affiliated sociologists in James Madison College, the College of Communications Arts and Sciences, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the College of Education.

MSU Sociology deeply values the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Signature Research Areas

ENVIRONMENT

Faculty and students active in our Environment program examine human-environment interaction, analyzing how humans affect the biophysical environment and how the biophysical environment influences social phenomena. MSU environmental sociologists investigate a wide range of topics including climate change, environmental inequality, energy justice, water rights, and agricultural and food systems. Using an array of methods (such as surveys, experiments, archival analyses, and community-based participatory research approaches), these scholars analyze the environmental decision-making of individuals, the environmental mobilization and activism of communities, the power and functioning of organizations as environmental actors, and the structural and institutional drivers of nations' ecological impacts. In recent years, MSU environmental sociologists have secured research funding from the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Department of Agriculture, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other national and international foundations.

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Faculty and students active in our Health and Medicine program investigate the social context of health, illness, and health care within the USA and cross-nationally. MSU health and medicine scholars analyze health disparities by race/ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexuality; the influence of family and social relationships on mental, physical, and cognitive health over the life course; political, economic, and environmental factors that

threaten health; and societal forces that impact the health care system. These sociologists often collaborate with faculty and students across MSU's College of Human Medicine, College of Osteopathic Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine, and College of Communication Arts and Sciences. In recent years, MSU health and medicine scholars have secured funding from the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Justice, and Department of Agriculture.

MIGRATION

Faculty and students active in our Migration program analyze the social, political, economic, and ecological forces that drive human movement, the diversity of the populations involved, and the impact they have in sending and receiving communities. MSU migration scholars apply the full range of sociological methods—from visual sociology and cultural studies to historical analysis, ethnography, demography, census analysis, and survey research—to examine such topics as refugees, statelessness, immigrant entrepreneurialism, assimilation processes, and the African Diaspora. MSU's Department of Sociology is a recognized center of expertise and excellence in research, teaching, and engagement on migration, transnationalism, and diaspora. In recent years, MSU migration scholars have secured funding from the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Social Science Research Council, Henry Luce Foundation, and other national and international foundations and agencies.



Testimonials

ABDULLAH F. ALREBH (2014)

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Grand Valley State University

“My graduate training at MSU gave me the major tools for being a successful faculty member. The community of sociology department works as a team, and a graduate student can easily seek help from any faculty member with no hesitation. The flexibility of letting grad students to develop their projects and choose their committee members is incredible. The financial support for participating in academic conferences was one of the keys of opening my eyes to the wider academic world, getting experience in public speaking, and making good connections. I am grateful to be an alumnus to this program.”

CRYSTAL EDDINS (2017)

Assistant Professor, Department of Africana Studies, University of North Carolina-Charlotte

“My experience with the MSU Department of Sociology, with invaluable support from faculty, staff, and my peers, prepared me to successfully enter the academic job market as a newly-minted PhD. I improved my methodological skills and theoretical knowledge, gained teaching experience, and developed an interdisciplinary perspective in pursuing a dual degree. I am proud to be an alum of MSU Sociology!”

BREANNE GRACE (2014)

Associate Professor and Faculty Principal of Maxcy College, University of South Carolina

“My graduate training at MSU was shaped by the exceptional programs in international sociology and the sociology of migration and the unique interdisciplinary area studies and linguistic programs through MSU’s Africa and development-centered Title VI centers. My work continues to be shaped by the interdisciplinary collaborative relationships I established during my time at MSU and the exceptional mentoring that I received—and continue to receive.”

RYAN GUNDERSON (2014)

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Gerontology, Miami University

“If you’re searching for a sociology graduate program that not only offers sturdy foundations in sociological theory and research methods, but also allows you to chart an interdisciplinary path, including the option of taking courses in the biological and physical sciences, I strongly recommend MSU Sociology. For those interested in human relations with the environment or animals, MSU Sociology has the largest cluster of well-known environmental sociologists in the world and a pioneering animal studies program. Faculty members actively pursue research collaborations with graduate students and are engaged advisors. I have the fondest memories of my time in East Lansing and am grateful to the Department of Sociology.”

SHANNON SHEN (2018)

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Texas A&M University – San Antonio

“I am so grateful for my time at MSU! The Department of Sociology provided rigorous graduate training along with flexibility for each student to mold their studies to fit their interests. The most memorable aspect of graduate school are the relationships I developed with my peers, the faculty, and the staff. It was a very supportive community that offered hands-on teaching and research experience. I owe my career to the guidance, encouragement, and opportunities that my mentors provided.”

CAMERON T. WHITLEY (2017)

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Western Washington University

“My graduate training provided a solid foundation in sociology, while also encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration. It is not an exaggeration to say that this training has been fundamental to my career trajectory. The graduate program offers the breadth and depth needed to successfully address complex social problems as a scholar and advocate. Through numerous opportunities to work with faculty within sociology and other departments, I graduated with over a dozen publications and worked with four dozen coauthors from an array of disciplines. This created an instant network that has been vital to beginning a career as a faculty member.”

YAN-LIANG (JERRY) YU (2016)

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminology, Howard University

“The sociology graduate program at Michigan State University provides professional sociological training and empower graduate students to develop our research and teaching interests with consistent faculty support. The program laid a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for my research career. My graduate training prepared me for a prominent postdoctoral position at the Columbia Aging Center, which then led to a tenure-track position at Howard University. It is a stimulating environment where you can learn and thrive.”

YAN ZHANG (2021)

Postdoc Research Associate, Center for Demography of Health and Aging, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“The training and mentorship I received at the MSU sociology program helped me in so many ways. The best part of the program is the collaborative environment that will benefit us long in academic career. The program offered me faculty support that has allowed me to transition from a graduate student into an independent researcher who is capable of publishing papers. Because of this support, I have the confidence to engage senior-level faculty in other settings, such as conferences and at my new place of employment. Besides publication process, I also gained knowledge of substantive areas that I continue to study today, such as presentation skills, grant writing, and quantitative methods. Moreover, when I served as the coordinator for the Family and Population Health lab, I enriched my administrative skills because I was charged with scheduling lab meetings, making decisions relating to meeting agendas, and communicating with our members.”

Placement Statistics

The Sociology Doctoral Program has recently analyzed placement information for students who earned their PhD between fall 2004 and summer 2021. The vast majority of these doctoral students are placed into academic positions at a variety of universities and colleges. These positions include tenure-system faculty, fixed term faculty, and post doctoral research fellows. A number of students also gained employment in other areas such as government, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit businesses.

SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1924

MSU Sociology has conferred 485 PhDs

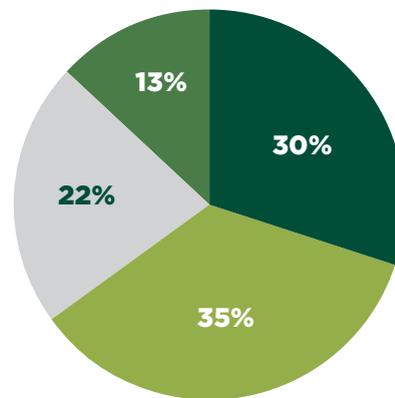


SINCE 2011

MSU Sociology conferred 64 doctorates

SECURED POSITIONS

- Tenure-System Faculty
- Fixed-Term System Faculty
- Post Doctoral Fellowship
- Non-Academia



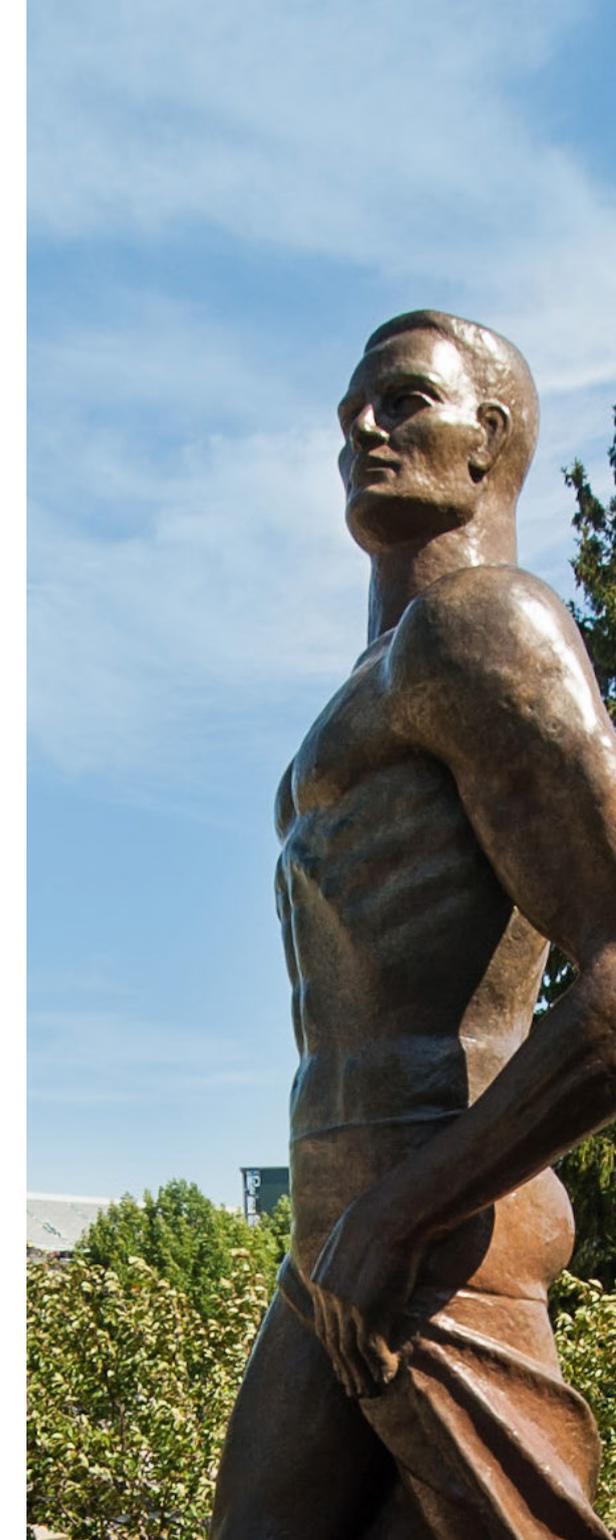
Application Information

The Sociology Doctoral Program prepares doctoral students for a variety of career options in academic and applied settings by providing a solid basis in foundational sociological knowledge as well as cutting-edge research methods and sociological theories.

New full-time students are admitted for the fall semester only. Students may apply for financial assistance in the form of teaching assistantships, research assistantships, or university fellowships. The number of highly competitive assistantships available to students varies from year to year.

APPLICATION MATERIALS NEEDED

- three letters of recommendation addressing academic and professional potential
- an academic writing sample such as a course paper or article from 10-25 pages in length
- resume or curriculum vitae
- a personal statement of 500-1,000 words that explains how your life experience has led you to Sociology and how your background has prepared you for success in our doctoral program
- an academic statement of 500-1,000 words that explains your primary fields of interest in Sociology, why you think MSU would be a good fit, what faculty members you would like to study with and why, and how you anticipate that your graduate studies in Sociology at MSU will prepare you to achieve your career goals
- official transcripts from all attended colleges and universities



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OUR SCIENCE **TRANSFORMS THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE**
AND INSPIRES LEADERS



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