



# SOCIAL PROBLEMS THEORY DIVISION

of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

*SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER*



**The Social  
Construction of  
Invasive Species**  
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**Outstanding Book &  
Student Paper  
Award Winners**  
Pages 5 & 6

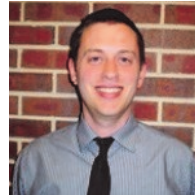


**"Fifty Years Later":  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings, Social Problems Theory Division Members!

The 2014 SSSP meeting in San Francisco is just a few weeks away! This newsletter includes news and information to get you ready for the meeting. You'll find announcements about our Outstanding Book and Student Paper Winners, a list of our sessions, and information about our divisional meeting and other notable SSSP events. You will also find information, including a call for sessions, related to the 2015 meeting in Chicago.



Inside, you'll also find brief commentary on the social construction of invasive species. (That's the notorious Emerald Ash Borer, which has laid waste to tens of millions of ash trees across the U.S., photographed above.) In the commentary, I preview the work of Andrew Prelog and Cotter Ellis, who will be presenting their paper, "Animals as Pests: Human Dimensions of Invasive Species," at Joel Best's Friday 12:30 session, "Social Construction of Social Problems: Theoretical Issues." I spoke with Prelog and Ellis about their research, the value of viewing invasive species, a seemingly natural problem, as a socially constructed one, and what the "invasive species" problem reveals about contemporary human-nature relationships.

Before closing, I'd like to extend my gratitude to John Barnshaw, the outgoing chair of the Division. I have had the pleasure of getting to know John over the past several years through his work with the SSSP. Those of you who know John know his commitment to social constructionism and social problems theory. You also know that the Division has been in good hands during his time as Chair. I hope to be as effective an advocate for the Division and its intellectual concerns as he was.

**Jared Del Rosso**  
University of Denver  
Social Problems Theory Division Chair (2014-2016)

**THEORY DIVISION CHAIR**  
2014 - 2016

**JARED DEL ROSSO**  
Sociology & Criminology  
University of Denver  
Denver, CO  
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## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

The Social Problems Theory Division is always looking for content to feature in the newsletter. If you have ideas for a brief essay or commentary that you would like to contribute, announcements about new publications that you would like to share with the division, a call for papers, or if you are working with a student whose research you think should be highlighted here, let me know by emailing me at [jared.delrosso@du.edu](mailto:jared.delrosso@du.edu). The deadline for submissions to the next issue is October 15, 2014.



# THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Each morning, I wake to the incessant chirp of single species of bird: house sparrows. Noisier than they are big, the species has colonized the courtyard outside of my apartment. The courtyard, though, is only a microcosm of the larger trend. Wherever Americans have put in their homes and shops, apartments and malls, house sparrows have moved in, taking over hedgerows, nesting boxes, and the nooks and crannies of our buildings. Though only introduced to the U.S. in the mid-1800s, the species is now ubiquitous. If you look for it, you'll likely find the house sparrow sidling up to you—hopping in its wind-up toy kind of way—the next time you take a coffee or meal on the patio of a café or restaurant.



Being both non-native and ubiquitous, the house sparrow is reviled by many. In a study of media discourse from the late-1800s, Gary Alan Fine and Lazaros Christoforides (1991) document the use of nativist language linking the “dirty” and “foreign” bird to immigrants. Today, bird enthusiasts lament the house sparrow’s reproductive success and its tendency to out-muscle native species. Indeed, the house sparrow’s aggression toward native birds provokes the sort of moral outrage usually reserved for sadists and serial killers. A May 2014 opinion piece in the *New York Times*, for instance, describes the house sparrow as, “pecking out the brains of bluebird mothers, dumping their lifeless bodies in the grass and then throwing their children out to die.” Americans, in turn, meet the house sparrows’ aggression with aggression of our own. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s webpage on the management of the bird concludes with this ominous statement: “Many raptor rehabilitation facilities will accept sparrows that have been euthanized humanely.” The categorization of animals—as villains or victims, pests or pets, native or not—has consequences for the animals caught on the wrong side of these divides.

Scholarship on “problem animals” suggests that these seemingly “natural” problems are, like our more familiar social problems, the outcome of claims-making processes. In addition to Fine and Christoforides’ study of house sparrows, Leslie Irvine (2003) has studied the process by which pet owners construe their pets as “problems” and justify surrendering them to shelters. Irvine’s work further reveals the unintentional and often well-intended complicity of shelters in that process. More recently, Colin Jerolmack (2008) has documented how pigeons came to be viewed as filthy, disease-ridden “rats with wings” in the U.S. As Fine and Christoforides found with house sparrows, Jerolmack shows that claims-makers linked the bird to other “undesirables,” such as “winos.”



To learn more about the social construction of invasive species and problem animals, I contacted Andrew J. Prelog (Sam Houston State University) and Colter Ellis (Montana State University). I asked Prelog and Ellis about their research, the value of viewing invasive species, a seemingly natural problem, as a socially constructed one, and what the “invasive species” problem reveals about contemporary human-nature relationships. My questions, which appear in bold, and Prelog and Ellis’ responses follow on pages 3 and 4.



# THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES

**Can you tell me a little bit about invasive species and your research on the human dimensions of them?**

The U.S. government defines an invasive species as “species that are non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health.” Invasive species can be megafauna, such as the feral swine in the Southern United States, but are more often birds, fish, macroinvertebrates, plants, and even fungi and bacteria. Studies of invasive species have traditionally been the purview of biology and ecology. This has left the human dimensions of invasive species largely overlooked. Our study seeks to understand the *social* processes through which species come to be defined as “invasive” and the consequences of this label. In many ways, this is a logical extension of the work of biologists and ecologists—as it is now widely recognized that the migration of these species is the result of human activity. Consequently, our research seeks to frame both the causes and consequences of non-native species as fundamentally a construction of human value systems.

Our work builds on the research of Colin Jerolmack, Gary Allen Fine and Lazaros Christoforides whose innovative studies show that our views toward problematic non-humans reflect cultural values and often have little, if anything, to do with the ecological or environmental impacts of those non-humans. Our work extends this research by looking at the actions of scientists and organizations charged with managing invasives and who frame problems with non-native species as detrimentally impacting native ecosystems or agricultural economic systems.

**The U.S. government’s definition of an invasive species seems clear and objective enough. In what way are “invasive species” constructed, though?**

One of the most interesting things about the study of invasive species is the relatively arbitrary distinction between “non-native” and “invasive.” Domesticated cats, for example, are non-native to the Americas, in many places have uncontrolled populations, and have drastic ecological impacts, especially on native bird populations. Still, these animals are not considered invasive due to their cultural significance. At the same time, the re-introduction of wolves in Yellowstone Park has sparked controversy, because this once eradicated predator has decreased deer and elk populations, interfering with hunters and wildlife enthusiasts. This story is complicated by the assertion that the introduced wolves are not necessarily the same subspecies that originally populated the area. It is likely that these arguments over the native’ness (or naturalness) of wolves in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem correspond with increased support for wolf culls in the area.

There is also a historical precedent for defining species as non-native. Ecosystems evolve and species migrate, emerge, or become extinct. One question that elicited our interest in this project is the designation of naturalness, or rather at what point might one say that the ecosystem is in a natural state? According the U.S. Forest service, a natural forest system existed during pre-colonial times. This designation fundamentally ignores non-European human activity involving plants and animals that most certainly altered ecosystems in ways that today would likely be defined as the introduction of invasive species.







# THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES

**Are there examples of a species with a contested “invasive” status? What explains the unevenness of responses to that species?**

There is actually a well-documented instance of this in northern Arizona, on the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam. With the construction of the dam, rivers flowing into the Colorado River (and consequently through Grand Canyon National Park) were fundamentally altered in terms of their temperature and silt content. Directly below Glen Canyon Dam, the trout population exploded and a fishing industry emerged to take advantage of the situation. If you review websites for fishing outfitters in this region, none will note that the trout are non-native to the area. And indeed, Arizona has placed limits on the number of trout that can be caught, in order to sustain their populations and subsequently the fishing industry. However, only a few miles downstream in Grand Canyon National Park, trout are formally designated as non-native and the NPS has an active management regime for controlling trout populations in the park. If you want to really muddy the waters, there are actually 27 different stakeholders who have a vested interest in how Glen Canyon Dam is operated. Although some of these groups may not directly engage with defining trout as invasive, any management plan that would alter the flows out of the dam in order to manage trout and protect endangered native species (which trout like to eat) produces heated and often contentious social conflict. The emergence of trout as invasive is a good example of how the idea of invasiveness is caught up in the political, economic, cultural, and ecological context that society has created.

From a historical perspective, the origins of many species now considered invasive are rooted in colonialism, or at least, in an effort to Europeanize the Americas. Swine, for example, were introduced in Florida by the Spanish as early as 1540 (Anderson 2004). European Starlings, one of the most established of invasive birds, are said to have been introduced as part of a plan to introduce all birds mentioned by Shakespeare (Zielinski 2011). The “problem” of invasive species originates in the biology and ecology literature around 1958 with the publication of Charles Elton’s book *The Ecology of Invasion by Animals and Plants*.

**Is there any overlap, in your view, between how the U.S. deals with invasive species and native pests (deer, coyotes, raccoons, etc.)? Conversely, what differences are there in how we deal with these two categories of animals?**

This is an important empirical question. While we don’t know the answer, we would suggest that there is likely significant overlap between the way invasive species and native pest species are dealt with. Suburban deer come to mind as a possible example. Deer populations are culled regularly, but it seems unlikely that they would be regarded as intruders or bodies that do not belong. They may even serve as a reminder that a given area was once “wilderness” and lead some to frame humans as the intruder. On a practical level, we deal with zebra mussels [which is considered an invasive species] in essentially the same way. Whenever possible, they are killed and cleared off of boats or other crafts that may transmit the species from one waterway to another. That said, zebra mussels are very much regarded as unwelcome outsiders ruining freshwater rivers and lakes.

While the response is largely the same (killing of the organism), the symbolism differs greatly.

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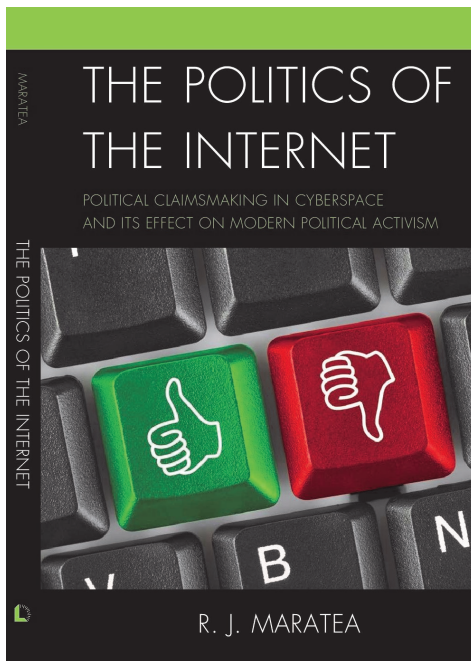
If you’d like to learn more about Prelog and Ellis’ work, you can hear them present their paper, “Animals as Pests: Human Dimensions of Invasive Species,” during Joel Best’s Friday afternoon session, **Social Construction of Social Problems: Theoretical Issues** (August 15, 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM, Foothill G2 room).



## 2014 OUTSTANDING BOOK AWARD

Each year, the Social Problems Theory Division recognizes an outstanding piece of scholarship on the social construction of social problems. In odd-numbered years, we give this award to published articles; in even-numbered years, we recognize an outstanding book. The 2014 Outstanding Book Award Committee consisted of Dave Lane (University of South Dakota), who chaired the committee, Donileen Loseke (University of South Florida), and John Barnshaw (University of Delaware). Thank you, David, Donileen, and John, for your work on the committee!

The committee selected R.J. Maratea's book *The Politics of the Internet: Political Claims-making in Cyberspace and its Effect on Modern Political Activism* (Lexington Books, 2013, 176 pages) as its 2014 Outstanding Book Award Winner. "We often discuss the importance of the internet," Lane wrote in his review of the book, "and this work extends the discussion to public consciousness of social problems. It challenges us to think of the internet as space where social problems can arise and explains how the internet is a space of contention for ideas about social problems to become diffused." Barnshaw added that the book is "exceptionally well written for a broader audience than just social problems theorists."



## ABOUT THE BOOK

**FROM THE COVER.** In *The Politics of the Internet: Political Claims-making in Cyberspace and Its Effect on Modern Political Activism*, R.J. Maratea examines the Internet's effect on political claims-making and protest action to show how online technology is helping to shape popular opinion about political issues. The Internet hosts a vast collection of interconnected public cyber-arenas where political claims are continuously disseminated to audiences and social reality is in a perpetual state of negotiation. Unlike more static forms of print and television communication, cyber-arenas can be expanded to carry a nearly infinite amount of claims in a variety of multimedia formats, which can be rapidly disseminated to global audiences for relatively little cost. The corresponding rise of citizen journalism and emergent forms of cyber-activism seemingly reflect how the Internet is revolutionizing the ways claimants attract audiences, acquire resources, and mobilize support, as well as the ways that mainstream journalists report on matters of political importance.

Maratea suggests that the Internet has not fundamentally changed how political activists attain cultural relevance. The press still largely determines what issues and activists are recognized by the public, and historically powerful claims-making groups, such as corporate lobbyists, are best positioned to succeed in a supposedly democratized new media world. The analysis offered in *The Politics of the Internet* will be of particular value to students and scholars of sociology, communications, and political science.

Visit the publisher's website for [The Politics of the Internet](#)

## ABOUT R.J. MARATEA

R.J. Maratea is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at New Mexico State University. His work in the areas of mass communication, social problems, deviant and criminal subcultures, and criminological theory has appeared in *Social Problems*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Symbolic Interaction*, and *Sociology Compass*. Maratea's article "The e-Rise and Fall of Social Problems: The Blogosphere as a Public Arena" (*Social Problems* 55[1]:139-60) was the 2009 co-winner of the Division's Outstanding Article Award. If you want to learn more about his research, I encourage you to attend the **New Directions in Social Problems Theory** session (Friday, August 15, 2:30-4:10, Foothill G2 room), at which Maratea will be presenting his paper, "The Internet as a Cyber-Arena: A Theoretical Framework for Online Claims-making."



# 2014 GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AWARD

Along with our award for outstanding published scholarship, the Social Problems Theory Division recognizes a paper written by a student with its annual Student Paper Award. The award is given to an outstanding, unpublished paper that has relevance to constructionist social problems theory.

The 2014 Graduate Student Paper Committee was chaired by Jack W. Spencer (Purdue University); its members were Donileen Loseke (University of South Florida) and Michael C. Adorjan (University of Hong Kong). Thank you, Jack, Donileen, and Michael, for your work on the committee!

The committee selected Arthur McLuhan's paper "Character Problems as Collective Behavior" to receive the Division's 2014 Graduate Student Paper Award. One committee member described McLuhan's paper as, "nicely written, thoroughly and elaborately situated in the classic literature and a very nice example of how to use qualitative data to advance theoretical arguments." Congratulations to Arthur on receiving the 2014 Outstanding Student Paper Award!

## "CHARACTER PROBLEMS AS COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR"

**ABSTRACT.** Character—as in people's essential interactional dispositions, especially of a durable and moral nature—is a central feature of everyday social life, but it is a subject that rarely receives sociological attention. When it does, the tendency in most of this work has been to follow psychology in treating character as a set of objective dispositions inhering in the individual, though socially produced or mediated. An extension of this objectivist emphasis, the typical approach to the study of character problems has been to treat them as dispositional essences. In this paper, I challenge this view, demonstrating instead that character problems are the result of collective definition and action. Drawing on 14 months of ethnographic research in two Protestant Christian seminaries, a natural history model of character trouble is presented that identifies three stages to the career of character problems: emergence, legitimation, and remediation. The symbolic interactionist and social constructionist traditions inform the analysis, which builds on classic statements by Blumer (1971), Emerson and Messinger (1977), and Lemert (1962).



## ABOUT ARTHUR MC LUHAN

Arthur McLuhan completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at McMaster University in April 2014. He earned his M.A. and B.A. at the University of Waterloo. His research and teaching concern the sociologies of self and identity, deviance and social problems, subcultures, and everyday life, with an emphasis on developing more general theories and concepts of social processes that are empirically grounded in the ethnographic examination of particular social worlds. His dissertation, "Character as a Sociological Phenomenon: An Interactionist Analysis of Seminary Life," examines the intersubjective and interactional foundations of character using ethnographic research in two Protestant Christian seminaries.

If you are interested in learning more about McLuhan's research, you can hear him present his paper at **Social Construction of Social Problems: Theoretical Issues** (Friday, August

15, 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM, Foothill G2 room).



# 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

## REMOVING THE MASK, LIFTING THE VEIL: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

August 21-23, 2015  
Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel  
Chicago, IL



**Marlese Durr**  
Wright State University  
SSSP President (2014-15)

### EXCERPT FROM PROGRAM THEME STATEMENT

*We wear the mask that grins and lies, / It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,- / ...  
Nay, let them only see us, while / We wear the mask."* - **Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1986**

*"Surely there shall yet dawn some mighty morning to lift the Veil and set the prisoned  
free."* - **W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903**

... as suddenly and decisively as Obama's election and the electoral directive arrived, he and it were faced with contests that left constituents for and of change bereft and asking: How do we remove the mask and lift the veil? What are consequences of doing so? How will they benefit a society in need of repair and reconciliation? On the other hand, I along with others ponder whether expanding our 50 years (1964-2014) of laboring to locate and eradicate separate, but imbalanced precepts within our democratic society will cause many to keep the mask in place and never lift the veil. Then again, the words of Dunbar and DuBois echo in our minds as we continue to contemplate removing the mask and lifting the veil.

In preparing to convene our 2015 meeting in Chicago, we invite scholars, scholar-activists and practitioners to examine the issues of race, gender, class, in the first decade and half of 21<sup>st</sup> century to locate avenues to continue the progressive work they have begun, by investigating fractures in building a culture free of "isms." As scholars in pursuit of a just society, what we offer at this time of historical change may alter the most pressing problems carried across centuries.

[Read more at the SSSP's 2015 Annual Meeting page.](#)



## CALL FOR SESSIONS

The Social Problems Theory Division will be organizing at least three sole-sponsored and up to seven co-sponsored sessions for the 2015 annual meeting. Any member can propose a session for the program. If you are interested in proposing a session for next year's meeting in Chicago, I encourage you to attend this year's divisional meeting on Saturday, August 16, at 10:30 a.m. in the Foothill E room. If you're unable to attend this meeting, just drop me an email with your idea for session, a proposed title, and a brief description. If you think the session would work best as a co-sponsored session, let me

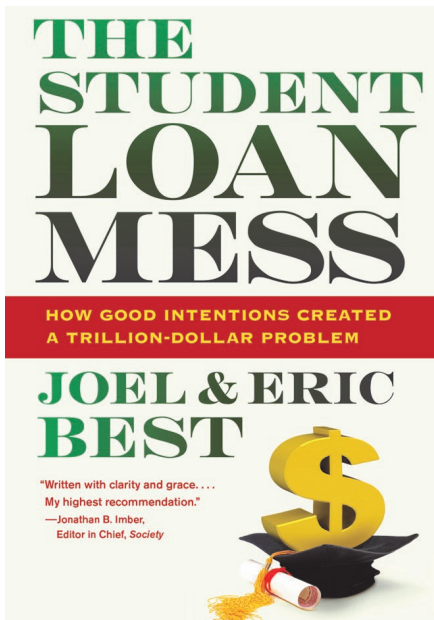
know what other division you think might be interested in co-sponsoring it. I especially welcome ideas for a thematic session that relates issues of constructionism, social problems theory, and Marlese Durr's theme for next year's meeting.

[Read more about the formats that SSSP sessions can take on the Society's website.](#)





## RECENT MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



2014 | UC Press | 248 pp.  
\$26.95 hardcover  
978-0-5202-7645-1  
ebook available  
[website](#)

**Joel Best** is Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware and author of *Damned Lies and Statistics*, *Stat-Spotting*, and *Everyone's a Winner*, all from UC Press.

**Eric Best** is Assistant Professor of Emergency Management at Jacksonville State University.

### The Student Loan Mess

How Good Intentions Created a Trillion-Dollar Problem

JOEL & ERIC BEST

This illuminating investigation uncovers the full dimensions of the student loan disaster. A father and son team—one a best-selling sociologist, the other a former banker and current quantitative researcher—probes how we've reached the point at which student loan debt—now exceeding \$1 trillion and predicted to reach \$2 trillion by 2020—threatens to become the sequel to the mortgage meltdown. In spite of their good intentions, Americans have allowed concerns about deadbeat students, crushing debt, exploitative for-profit colleges, and changing attitudes about the purpose of college education to blind them to a growing crisis.

With college costs climbing faster than the cost of living, how can access to higher education remain a central part of the American dream? With more than half of college students carrying an average debt of \$27,000 at graduation, what are the prospects for young adults in the current economy? Examining how we've arrived at and how we might extricate ourselves from this grave social problem, *The Student Loan Mess* is a must-read for everyone concerned about the future of American education.

"Written with clarity and grace. . . . My highest recommendation."—**Jonathan B. Imber**, Editor in Chief, *Society*

"In this fully documented—but highly readable—study, Joel and Eric Best parcel out the blame among politicians, educational institutions, and the students themselves. Importantly, they propose timely actions to take 'before this latest financial bubble bursts.'"—**Richard J. Mahoney**, Distinguished Executive-in-Residence, Weidenbaum Center on the Economy, Government and Public Policy, Washington University, St. Louis

"Edgy and astute. . . . This engaging book will appeal to a broad audience of interested general readers."—**John Iceland**, Professor of Sociology and Demography, Penn State University





## RECENT MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



2014 | NYU Press | 200 pp.  
\$24.95 cloth  
978-0-8147-6073-4  
ebook available  
[website](#)

**JOEL BEST** is Professor of Sociology & Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware. He has published more than twenty books on social problems and deviance, including *Threatened Children*, *Random Violence*, and *Damned Lies and Statistics*.

**KATHLEEN A. BOGLE** is Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at La Salle University in Philadelphia. She is the author of *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*.

### Kids Gone Wild

**From Rainbow Parties to Sexting, Understanding the Hype Over Teen Sex**

**JOEL BEST AND KATHLEEN A. BOGLE**

To hear mainstream media sources tell it, the sex lives of modern teenagers outpace even the smuttiest of cable television shows. Teen girls “sext” explicit photos to boys they like; they wear “sex bracelets” that signify what sexual activities they have done, or will do; they team up with other girls at “rainbow parties” to perform sex acts on groups of willing teen boys; they form “pregnancy pacts” with their best girlfriends to all become teen mothers at the same time. From *The Today Show*, to CNN, to the *New York Times*, stories of these events have been featured widely in the media. But are most teenage—or younger—children really going to sex parties and having multiple sexual encounters in an orgy-like fashion?

Researchers say no—teen sex is actually not rampant and teen pregnancy is at low levels. But why do stories like these find such media traffic, exploiting parents’ worst fears? How do these rumors get started, and how do they travel around the country and even across the globe?

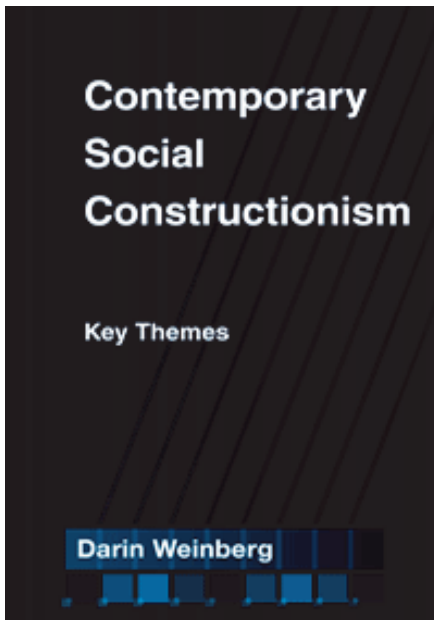
In *Kids Gone Wild*, best-selling authors Joel Best and Kathleen A. Bogle use these stories about the fears of the growing sexualization of childhood to explore what we know about contemporary legends and how both traditional media and the internet perpetuate these rumors while, at times, debating their authenticity. Best and Bogle describe the process by which such stories spread, trace how and to where they have moved, and track how they can morph as they travel from one medium to another. Ultimately, they find that our society’s view of kids raging out of control has drastic and unforeseen consequences, fueling the debate on sex education and affecting policy decisions on everything from the availability of the morning after pill to who is included on sex offender registries.

A surprising look at the truth behind the sensationalism in our culture, *Kids Gone Wild* is a much-needed wake-up call for a society determined to believe the worst about its young people.

"Adult moral panic, fear of a sexually active teen planet and sensationalized media coverage are met with a critical eye and solid data analysis. Best & Bogle warn us, don't believe the hype, the kids are alright! A lively and welcomed addition to the literature in youth studies and media studies."— **Donna Gaines**, author of *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids*



## RECENT MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



2014 | Temple University Press  
204 pp. | 5.5x8.25"  
\$49.50 cloth | 978-1-4399-0924-0  
ebook available  
[website](#)

**DARIN WEINBERG** is a Reader in the Department of Sociology at Cambridge University and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He authored *Of Others Inside: Insanity, Addiction, and Belonging in America* (Temple), which won the Melvin Pollner Prize in Ethnomethodology.

### Contemporary Social Constructionism

#### Key Themes

**DARIN WEINBERG**

"Darin Weinberg shows, significantly, that there are varieties of social constructionism and, importantly, that the issue of reality is not as threatening as some have figured it to be. From chapters on constructions of the body and the self to a chapter on the construction of social problems, the scientific and moral sweep of the discussion offers unique insight into the breadth of the approach. Contemporary Social Constructionism is a must read for any and all concerned with the experiential status of the person and society." —**Jaber F. Gubrium**, University of Missouri

"Weinberg provides a sophisticated and comprehensive outline of the philosophical, epistemological, and historical underpinnings of social constructionism. This book is essential for anyone working in the constructionist paradigm or interested in it more generally—or for anyone setting out to critique it. It should be required reading for any graduate sociology course that takes social constructionism to heart. Contemporary Social Constructionism is the best theoretical/philosophical discussion of constructionism that I have read. Weinberg does an unprecedented service to the discipline." —**James Holstein**, Marquette University

*Contemporary Social Constructionism* illuminates how constructionist social science developed in relation to positivism, critical and hermeneutic philosophy, and feminism and then goes on to distinguish the concept from postmodernism and deconstructionism. In addition, Weinberg shows how social constructionists have contributed to our understanding of biology, the body, self-knowledge, and social problems.

The result is a contemporary statement of social constructionism that shores up its scientific veracity and demonstrates its analytic power, promise, and influence. The book concludes with a look toward the future of the concept and its use.



## RECENT MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



2014 | Routledge | 112 pp.  
\$10.95 paperback  
978-0-415-73712-8  
ebook available  
[website](#)

**ERIC BONDS** is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Mary Washington. His research has appeared in *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *Critical Sociology*, *Societies Without Borders*, and *Peace Review*. He teaches courses in environmental sociology and social issues.

### Social Problems

#### A Human Rights Approach

**ERIC BONDS**

This short book lays out a new definition for what constitutes a social problem: the violation of a group's human rights, which are understood as commonly upheld standards about what people deserve and should be protected from in life. Evaluating U.S. society from an international human rights perspective, Bonds also stresses that human rights are necessarily political and can therefore never be part of a purely objective exercise to assess wellbeing in a particular society. His approach recognizes that there is no one single interpretation of what rights mean, and that different groups with differing interests are going to promote divergent views, some better than others.

Division members interested in *Social Problems: A Human Rights Approach* may also be interested in Bonds' recent article, "[Grappling with Structure, Social Construction, and Morality: Towards a Human Rights Approach to Social Problems Instruction](#)," *Societies Without Borders*, 2013, 8(1):137-162.



## JOB LISTINGS

### University of Denver

Department of Sociology and Criminology

Area: Social Inequality

**University of Denver.** The Department of Sociology and Criminology invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor beginning Fall 2015. Applications are sought from candidates with a strong record of scholarship and teaching in social inequality (preference will be given to candidates who can teach a course on race and ethnicity). A PhD in sociology or related fields is strongly preferred; ABD considered. We are a department of active, productive scholars in the Division of Social Sciences with strong ties to the University's College of Law, Graduate School of Social Work, and other professional schools. The University of Denver, the oldest independent university in the Rocky Mountain region, enrolls over 12,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs. The Carnegie Foundation classifies the University of Denver as a research university with high research activity. Our department offers BA degrees in sociology and criminology. Salary is competitive. Applications MUST be completed on-line at the following website: <http://www.dujobs.org>. You will be required to attach a letter of interest (including e-mail address), curriculum vitae, a sample of scholarship, and evidence of teaching excellence. Three letters of recommendation are also required and should be submitted by recommenders at the same website. The Search Committee will begin considering applications on September 8. The position will remain open until filled. Please e-mail questions about the position to Lisa Martinez, Chair of the Department ([Lisa.Martinez@du.edu](mailto:Lisa.Martinez@du.edu)). We are strongly dedicated to the pursuit of inclusive excellence and diversity. See our Diversity Statement at <http://www.du.edu/chancellor/diversityStatement.html>. DU is an EEO/AA employer. Visit our website at <http://www.du.edu/ahss/sociology>.

### University of Denver

Department of Sociology and Criminology

Area: Crime, Law, Deviance

**University of Denver.** The Department of Sociology and Criminology invites applications for two tenure-track Assistant Professors beginning Fall 2015. Applications are sought from candidates with a strong record of scholarship and teaching in crime/law/deviance. A PhD in sociology or related fields is strongly preferred; ABD considered (JD insufficient). We are a department of active, productive scholars in the Division of Social Sciences with strong ties to the University's College of Law, Graduate School of Social Work, and other professional schools. The University of Denver, the oldest independent university in the Rocky Mountain region, enrolls over 12,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs. The Carnegie Foundation classifies the University of Denver as a research university with high research activity. Our department offers BA degrees in sociology and criminology. Salary is competitive. Applications MUST be completed on-line at the following website: <http://www.dujobs.org>. You will be required to attach a letter of interest (including e-mail address), curriculum vitae, a sample of scholarship, and evidence of teaching excellence. Three letters of recommendation are also required and should be submitted by recommenders at the same website. The Search Committee will begin considering applications on September 8. The position will remain open until filled. Please e-mail questions about the position to Lisa Martinez, Chair of the Department ([Lisa.Martinez@du.edu](mailto:Lisa.Martinez@du.edu)). We are strongly dedicated to the pursuit of inclusive excellence and diversity. See our Diversity Statement at <http://www.du.edu/chancellor/diversityStatement.html>. DU is an EEO/AA employer. Visit our website at <http://www.du.edu/ahss/sociology>.





# JOB LISTINGS

## MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

The **Department of Social and Cultural Sciences** invites applications for a **tenure track position** at the rank of Assistant Professor, beginning August 2015. Applicants will contribute primarily to the Criminology and Law Studies major and should be prepared to teach US Criminal Court Process, Introduction to Criminology and other courses in the Criminology and Law Studies major related to the area of research interest. Research specialization open. Applicants should demonstrate excellence in teaching, evidence of scholarly productivity, and a clear research agenda. Ph.D. in criminology, criminal justice, sociology, or related field required by time of appointment. Applicants with a Ph.D. and J.D. or LL.M. are a plus.

The Department of Social and Cultural Sciences offers undergraduate majors in Anthropology, Criminology and Law Studies, Social Welfare and Justice, and Sociology. The department is committed to excellence in both teaching and scholarship. Please visit the department web site: <http://www.marquette.edu/socs/>.

Marquette University is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Members of racial/ethnic minorities and women are strongly encouraged to apply. The campus is located near downtown Milwaukee in a racially diverse area with convenient access to national, state, and local government agencies, and many private institutions and non-profit organizations.

Review of candidates will begin on **October 1, 2014**. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

***Please note: All applicants must apply online.*** Use the following links to Marquette's department of Human Resources to apply:

**Assistant Professor – Criminology and Law Studies**

<http://employment.marquette.edu/postings/3175>

***Online materials requested include:*** CV, cover letter, evidence of teaching effectiveness, writing sample, and a brief research plan. ABD candidates must provide timetable for completion of PhD.

***In addition to applying online:*** Please arrange to have three letters of recommendation sent to the department via USPS to:

Search Committee  
Department of Social and Cultural Sciences  
Lalumiere Hall 340  
Marquette University  
P.O. Box 1881  
Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881  
(Street address for courier delivery is 526 N. 14<sup>th</sup> St, Milwaukee, WI 53233)



## 2014 ANNUAL MEETING

August 15 - 17, 2014  
Marriot Marquis  
San Francisco, CA

# DIVISIONAL MEETING & CONFERENCE EVENTS

### **SOCIAL PROBLEMS THEORY DIVISION MEETING**

Saturday, August 16, 10:30 AM - 12:10 PM, Foothill E

Please join me at the Social Problems Theory divisional meeting to begin planning for next year's conference in Chicago, develop committees for our student paper and published article awards, and discuss other Division business. No prior experience with the SSSP or the Division is required to attend the meeting. New members and student members are especially encouraged to attend! If you're new to the Division or simply looking for a way to get more involved with it or the SSSP, I think you'll find our division meeting to be a low-pressure and welcoming way of doing so. Feel free to email me with questions about the division or ideas for the 2015 conference if you're unable to attend this meeting.

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### **SSSP'S WELCOMING RECEPTION**

Thursday, August 14, 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM, Club Room  
Open to SSSP Registrants

All meeting registrants are invited to the Welcoming Reception on Thursday, August 14, to celebrate the opening of the 64th Annual Meeting. This social hour kicks off at 6:30pm and provides opportunities to renew past acquaintances, chat with old friends, and find a newcomer to befriend. New members and first-time meeting attendees are particularly encouraged to come and have fun!

### **Division Sponsored Reception**

Friday, August 15, 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM  
Mission Grille (Hotel's Restaurant)

### **Graduate Student Happy Hour**

Friday, August 15, 10:00 PM - 11:00 PM  
Bin 55 (Hotel's Restaurant)  
Open to SSSP Graduate Student Members

### **New Member Breakfast**

Saturday, August 16, 7:15 AM - 8:15 AM  
Club Room  
Open to new SSSP members and hosts.

### **Presidential Address**

Saturday, August 16, 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM  
Club Room



# ONE-DAY CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND SYMPOSIUMS

## ONE-DAY CONFERENCE: CRITICAL AND ACTIVIST SCHOLARSHIP

Monday, August 18, 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM, The San Francisco Marriott Marquis

No fee to attend this conference.

From its inception as the *Insurgent Sociologist*, formed as a result of the social action of the “Sociology Liberation Movement” at the 1969 meetings of the American Sociological Association, *Critical Sociology* has been committed to publishing scholarship from Marxist, post-Marxist, Feminist, and other critical perspectives. It has published articles on a wide range of topics by scholars from North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, including Labor and the Labor Movement, Globalization and Work, Gender, Race and Critical Race Theory, and the Neoliberal Crisis.

This year we saw the passing of a colleague, friend, activist and revolutionary, Rod Bush. The conference is dedicated to his work and memory, and will include two panels reflecting on Rod’s contributions to and impact on the struggle for revolutionary change and social justice. This conference will also include panels that reflect upon the impact *Critical Sociology* has had on these and other areas, and present current trends in critical sociological scholarship. It will provide the opportunity for an exchange between international scholars, activists, and anyone interested in progressive social change.

Full conference program: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1785/m/600>

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## ONE-DAY CONFERENCE: INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMATIC AND POLICY RESPONSES TO POVERTY

Monday, August 18, 8:30 AM – 5:15 PM, The San Francisco Marriott Marquis

\$100 for employed faculty/practitioners; \$70 for unemployed/community activists/students

120 person limit

The purpose of this one-day conference is to bring together scholars, local experts, policymakers, practitioners, activists, and others to re-imagine the ways in which we address poverty as well as to identify innovative programmatic and policy responses aimed at reducing poverty locally, nationally, and globally. The conference will include panels on practice, policy, and research on poverty in this post-Great Recession period from a variety of sectors and provide the opportunity for cross-disciplinary and cross-national exchange.

Full conference program: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1803/m/600>



# ONE-DAY CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND SYMPOSIUMS

## INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

Monday, August 18, 8:30am–5:00pm, The San Francisco Marriott Marquis

\$100 for employed registrants or \$70 for unemployed/activist and student registrants

Limit 50

This workshop will be of interest to researchers who are using or planning to use IE. The program will use an interactive format to provide participants with opportunities to discuss their work and to build on questions and innovations that arise. Somewhat informal, the workshop will involve variously experienced IE researchers who will be invited to consult and discuss various issues that arise when planning and conducting an IE. As in prior years, doing *analysis* in IE will be core to the proceedings.

Full workshop program: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1783/m/600>

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## 21ST CENTURY CAPITALISM RECONSIDERED

Ad Hoc ASA Symposium

Monday, 18 August, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Glide Church

The themes of both the ISA and ASA this year have been concerned growing inequalities and their consequences. This is generally well known, especially by sociologists, economists, political scientists and others and many others. Then all of sudden, the English translation of a book on the topic catapulted Thomas Piketty into rock star status, off the charts in sales, and heated discussions on numerous chat groups, lists, social media etc. This also took place on some of the chats of ASA groups. It soon became the hottest topic ever. There were some suggestions that we have an ad hoc session on the topic. In the flurry of discussions, David A Smith and Lauren Langman, somehow became co-organizers of a session. It will be at Glide Church, 330 Ellis across from Hilton. We have a program with a number of highly qualified well known scholars who have long dealt with political economy. Please join us, and forward this notice.

### Co-Organizers

Lauren Langman, Loyola University of Chicago, David Smith, University of California, Irvine

### Presider

David Smith, University of California, Irvine

### Participants

*Some folks have not yet confirmed*

Saskia Sassen, Professor of Sociology, Colombia University

Chris Chase-Dunn, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Riverside

Sylvia Wallby, Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University

Basak Kus, Professor of Sociology, Wesleyan University

The presentations will be brief and hopefully foster interesting discussions.





# 2014 ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORED SESSIONS

## PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

\* Please refer to the final program for any changes to the schedule.

### **SESSION 17: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS: CASE STUDIES**

Friday, August 15, 10:30 AM - 12:10 PM, Foothill G2

Sponsor: Social Problems Theory

Organizer: Joel Best, University of Delaware

Presider: R. J. Maratea, New Mexico State University

#### **PAPERS**

"No Men in Girl's Bathrooms: Embodied Harm to Children Arguments in Anti-Transgender Campaigns," Amy L. Stone, Trinity University

"On The Question of Vegan Privilege," Jessica B. Greenebaum, Central Connecticut State University

"The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity," Gina Petonito, Miami University

"Race, Carceral Devolution, and the Transformation of Urban Poverty in America," Reuben Miller, University of Michigan

"Punishment and Social Order among Inmates," Michael L. Walker, University of Nebraska, Omaha

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### **SESSION 29: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS: THEORETICAL ISSUES**

Friday, August 15, 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM, Foothill G2

Sponsor: Social Problems Theory

Organizer: Joel Best, University of Delaware

Presider: James Holstein, Marquette University

#### **PAPERS**

"The Stuff of Social Problems: Materiality and Constructionism," Jared Del Rosso, University of Denver and Jennifer J. Esala, Center for Victims of Torture

"The Social Construction of Illness Experience as Epistemic Leverage," Hwa-Yen Huang, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University

"Character Problems as Collective Behavior," Arthur McLuhan, McMaster University, Winner of the Social Problems Theory Division's Student Paper Competition

"Animals as Pests: Human Dimensions of Invasive Species," Andrew J. Prelog and Colter Ellis, Sam Houston State University

"The Ebb and Flow of Social Problems: An Exploration of Usage Patterns in Claims-making," Keith R. Johnson, Oakton Community College, Illinois



# SPONSORED SESSIONS

## **SESSION 41: NEW DIRECTIONS IN SOCIAL PROBLEMS THEORY**

Friday, August 15, 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM, Foothill G2

Sponsors: Social Problems Theory

Organizer & Presider: R. J. Maratea, New Mexico State University

### **PAPERS**

"Does Health Status Influence Attitudes Regarding Government Healthcare Spending? Applying Terror Management Theory to the Healthcare Spending Debate," Kathleen Abrahamson, Purdue University and Ryan LeCount, Hamline University

"The Geek Instinct: Technological Competence and Cultural Alignment in Disadvantaged Contexts," Cassidy Puckett, Northwestern University

"The Internet as a Cyber-Arena: A Theoretical Framework for Online Claims-making," R. J. Maratea, New Mexico State University

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## **SESSION 53: HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE 'POVERTY PROBLEM' (THEMATIC)**

Friday, August 15, 4:30 PM - 6:10 PM, Foothill G2

Sponsors: Disabilities, Health, Health Policy, and Health Services, & Social Problems Theory

Organizer: Jack W. Spencer, Purdue University

Presider: Deborah A. Potter, University of Louisville

### **PAPERS**

"Blaming the Victim: The Ideology of Social Mobility in the War on the Poor," Jill Niebrugge Brantley and Patricia Lengermann, The George Washington University

"Constructing the Reproductive Behavior of Poor People: From Malthus to Murray," Stephen Monroe Tomczak and Mary Ellen Crawford, Southern Connecticut State University, Department of Social Work

"Evolution of Responsibility for Poverty: New Federalism and State Poverty Reduction Coalitions," Linda S. Schmidt, Michigan State University

"From the War on Poverty to the War on the Poor: The Devolution Revolution in the United States," Ingrid Phillips Whitaker, Old Dominion University and Mark M. Whitaker, Hampton University

"Why Don't They DO Something? The Societal Problematization of 'Homelessness' and the Relationship between Discursive Framing and Social Change," Kaitlin J. Schwan, University of Toronto



# SPONSORED SESSIONS

## **SESSION 93: POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND THE POLITICS OF REALITY**

Saturday, August 16, 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM, Club Room

Sponsors: Institutional Ethnography & Social Problems Theory

Organizer & Discussant: Jared Del Rosso, University of Denver

### **PAPERS**

"Mental Health and Epistemic Cultures: The DSM in Research and Practice," Michael Halpin, University of Wisconsin-Madison

"Demedicalizing Kink: Activism, Institutional Reflexivity, and the Vindication of Social Problems," Kai Lin, University of Delaware

"Bonafide Illness? The Indexical Nature of Bifurcated Consciousness of Mental Disability in the Workplace," Cindy Malachowski, Peter Sawchuk, Katheryn Boydell and Bonnie Kirsh, University of Toronto

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## **Session 117: Constructing Theories of Poverty, Inequality, and Policy: Potentials and Limitations (Thematic)**

Sunday, August 17, 8:30 AM - 10:10 AM, Foothill H

Sponsors: Conflict, Social Action, and Change, Social Problems Theory, Sociology and Social Welfare

Organizer: Nicole D'Anna, University at Albany, SUNY

Presider: Steven E. Wallis, Capella University/FAST/ASK MATT

### **PAPERS**

"Integrative Propositional Analysis: An Emerging Methodology for Constructing More Useful Theories of Poverty," Bernadette M. Wright, Meaningful Evidence, LLC and Steven E. Wallis, Capella University/FAST/ASK MATT

"Retrospectives: Bayard Rustin and the Freedom Budget," Enrico Beltramini, Notre Dame de Namur University

"The Power of Representation: Discourses of State 'Fragility' and 'Failure'," Emily Philipp, Boston University

"Positive Functions of Homelessness," Jacob Avery, University of California, Irvine

"Conceptualizing an Emotional Biography and Hopeful Activism in Sustaining Long-Term Activism in a Local Welfare Rights Movement," Kaleema Annie Sumareh, Wayne State University, Ph. D. Student, Sociology



# SPONSORED SESSIONS

## **SESSION 139: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS: INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

Sunday, August 17, 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM, Foothill G1

Sponsor: Social Problems Theory

Organizer & Presider: Joel Best, University of Delaware

### **PAPERS**

"The Construction and Transformation of Low Birthrate Issues in Japan since 1990's," Manabu Akagawa, University of Tokyo

"How Do We Share Rhetoric of Claims?: The Construction of a 'Doujinshi (Fan Fiction)' Culture Issue through 'Virtual Child Pornography' Controversy in Japan," Toshiaki Sato, Interdisciplinary Information Studies, University of Tokyo

"Owning the Past: Constructing Cultural History Through Claimsmaking Activity," David C. Lane, University of South Dakota

"Becoming a 'Terrorist': Interests, Illegitimacy, Islam," Winston Y. Chou, Princeton University

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## **SESSION 151: TEACHING SOCIAL PROBLEMS: GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONALISM**

Sunday, August 17, 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM, Foothill G1

Sponsors: Global, Social Problems Theory, Teaching Social Problems

Organizer & Presider: Alexandra Pineros-Shields, Brandeis University

### **PAPERS**

"Cultivating Collective Action: Contesting Growth Logic Using Deliberative Democratic Tactics," Dagoberto Cortez, University of Wisconsin-Madison

"Globalizing' Intro to Social Problems," David A. Smith, UC-Irvine

"Identity Crises in International Schools: New Forms of Citizenship in Local and Global Contexts," Mollie A. Davis, Drexel University

"New Managerialism and the Engaged University," Elizabeth L. Brule, York University

"Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: Teaching Globalization Using a Community-Based Learning Approach," Stephanie A. Limoncelli, Loyola Marymount University





# REFERENCES & CREDITS

## “The Social Construction of Invasive Species.”

- Anderson, Virginia D. 2004. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fine, Gary Alan, and Lazaros Christoforides. 1991. “Dirty Birds, Filthy Immigrants, and the English Sparrow War: Metaphorical Linkage in Constructing Social Problems.” *Symbolic Interaction* 14(4):375–93.
- Irvine, Leslie. 2003. “The Problem of Unwanted Pets: A Case Study in How Institutions ‘Think’ about Clients’ Needs.” *Social Problems* 50(4):550–66.
- Jerolmack, Colin. 2008. “How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of Problem Animals.” *Social Problems* 55 (1):72–94.
- Zielinski, Sara. 2011. “The invasive Species We Can Blame on Shakespeare.” *Smithsonian Magazine*. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-invasive-species-we-can-blame-on-shakespeare-95506437/>

## PHOTOGRAPH OF “ADULT FLASH FEEDING,” EMERALD ASH BORER (P. 1)

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## PHOTOGRAPH OF SSSP 2013 MEETING (P. 7)

Michele Smith Koontz

## Layout of Book Announcements (P. 9-12)

Based on Temple University Press’s flier for *Contemporary Social Constructionism*