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Social Sciences and Humanities Research

The social sciences and humanities have long provided insight into what it means to be human. Today, they also play an integral role in shaping rapid technological and medical advances. They are powerful drivers of economic and cultural development. And they provide context for the prolific visual culture we live in.

At Northeastern, they are also pathways for identifying society's most daunting challenges and articulating solutions. Our faculty do this through rare new blends of interdisciplinary collaborations and in thriving partnerships with other institutions.

Northeastern's Leading Humanities Scholars



Chris Bosso, professor of political science, associate dean of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, associate dean for faculty in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, director of the Nanotechnology and Society Research Group

Research focus: The societal impacts of science and technology, particularly nanotechnology and other emerging technologies; environmental and food-safety policies; and the tactics and strategies used by environmental groups.

Recent grants and activities: \$1.4 million over four years from the National Science Foundation for a study on nanotechnology and the public interest. Bosso is a senior researcher with the NSF-funded Nanoscale Science and Engineering Center for High-rate Nanomanufacturing at Northeastern. His most recent major scholarly work is an edited volume called *Governing Uncertainty: Environmental Regulation in the Age of Nanotechnology*.



Dennis Cokely, professor of American Sign Language (ASL); director of the World Languages Center; chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Research focus: Interpreted and mediated communication; the linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical effects of interpreters on the American Deaf Community; theoretical and practical issues in translation and interpretation; and the impact and effect of interpreters in various communicative settings.

Recent grants: \$4.5 million from the Department of Education to lead the effort to improve the quality of ASL-English interpreters nationwide.

Spotlight

Northeastern researchers are taking an unconventional approach to measuring political climate—at home and abroad.

A team of Northeastern investigators is studying Twitter posts to gauge the collective mood of citizens in the United States. They're collaborating on an analysis of 300 million tweets, producing a shifting visual representation of the collective happiness of tweeters across the country.

Such real-time data could eventually explain how the collective mood of Twitter Nation changes in response to specific events, such as a sudden dip in the stock market, or impending political elections, explains **Alan Mislove**, an assistant professor of computer and information science and a co-investigator on the study.

Meanwhile on the other side of the globe, assistant professor of anthropology **Doreen Lee** is examining broad social and political developments in Indonesia through graffiti and murals painted on bridges and buildings in major cities throughout the nation.

Street art, says Lee, provides evidence of political change that began in the late 1990s, and indicates the general mood of the country.



William T. Dickens, Distinguished Professor of Economics and Social Policy

Research focus: Labor markets, wage determination, unemployment, monetary policy, inner-city employment problems, effects of trade on employment and wages, poverty, income support, intelligence testing, and psychology and economics.

Recent grants and activities: Support from international partners for a research project on wage rigidity in collaboration with the Brookings Institution; a Russell Sage Foundation Research Fellowship; a World Bank grant to write a paper on labor-market policy for the Growth and Development Commission; and a Pew Charitable Trust grant to study the effects of preschool education on economic growth. Dickens is also a nonresident senior fellow in the Economics Studies Program at the Brookings Institution (he was in residence from 1994 to 2007). He has been a senior economist for the President’s Council of Economic Advisers and a consultant for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and the World Bank.



Amy Farrell, assistant professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Research focus: Measuring the effect of race and gender in police, prosecution, and sentencing practices; factors that predict and explain acquittals in jury trials; police legitimacy; and law-enforcement responses to crimes, such as hate crime and human trafficking.

Recent grants and activities: \$507,000 from the National Institute of Justice for a study on state and local prosecution of human-trafficking cases for the National Institute of Justice; \$400,000 from the National Bureau of Justice Statistics to oversee a national data-collection program on law-enforcement investigations of human trafficking. Farrell was a corecipient of the National Institute of Justice’s W. E. B. Du Bois Fellowship on crime justice and culture in 2006. She has also testified about law-enforcement identification of human trafficking before the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.



David Lazer, associate professor of political science, and computer and information science

Research focus: The emerging field of computational social science, particularly the ways social networks are used in politics, governance, and public policy; and how relationships among institutions—government and other—affect social-networking systems positively and negatively.

Recent grants: \$194,000 from the National Science Foundation to look at how innovation is shared across government organizations; \$50,000 from the Office of Naval Research to create a workshop on computational social science.

NORTHEASTERN RECOGNIZED FOR GLOBALIZATION

Northeastern’s experiential approach to global education is getting noticed. Both the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, recently recognized the University as a global-education leader. And Northeastern’s Dialogue of Civilizations program was named a top study-abroad program and awarded the 2011 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education by the Institute of International Education.

College of Social Sciences and Humanities dean Georges Van Den Abbeele sees the continued expansion of this global experiential path as a boon for the humanities at Northeastern. “The opportunity to take Middle Eastern studies, for example,” says Van Den Abbeele, “and then work with an NGO in Cairo or Beirut or Tel Aviv, or to pursue a major in history and work on cultural preservation in Peru is to gain an incredibly rich education while engaging in work of the highest importance.”

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