

New Faculty Spotlight: Archaeologist Dr. Jacob Skousen

I am a North American archaeologist. For the last 13 years, I have worked in the Midwest. My research focuses on the precontact Native American city of Cahokia in modern-day Collinsville, Illinois, and specifically the role of pilgrimage and other sacred journeys in the formation of ancient cities like Cahokia.

I also have other research interests; for example, I am currently working at a 14th century Native American village in east-central Illinois, and am aiming to start a long-term project at Nauvoo, Illinois. Despite my interest in and love of Midwestern archaeology, I had no idea that I would end up here. My career began in 2005 as a field school student in Petra, Jordan, where we excavated a 2,000 year old Nabatean tomb.

I received my bachelor's degree in 2006, and immediately began a master's program. During that time, I worked as a teaching and research assistant, and periodically as a field archaeologist where I conducted surveys and excavations, performed artifact analysis, and occasionally supervised field school excavations in the Great Basin and Southwest. I realized I didn't want to work in the Middle East, so I changed my focus to Central America. I traveled to Guatemala for 2 summers to conduct research for my Master's thesis on Classic-period Maya ceramics, and received my Master's degree in 2009.

After earning my master's degree, I again switched focus from Central America to the Midwest. I landed a job at the Illinois State Archaeological Survey to conduct excavations at the East St. Louis site, an extension of the Cahokia site. The following year I began a PhD program at the University of Illinois, where I graduated in 2016.

Upon graduation and up until I began this WIU job, I worked at the Illinois State Archaeological Survey, where I conducted surveys and excavations throughout Illinois, analyzed artifacts, and wrote reports and grants. I thoroughly enjoyed this job, so I did not intend to make the jump to academia. However, I was interested in the job at WIU because I could easily continue my research in the Midwest - it is rare for an academic archaeologist to live near their research area.



Sociology and Anthropology at Western Illinois University

“Western Illinois University is about access and opportunity.”

Chair Notes



**Dr. Tawnya
Adkins Covert,**
Department Chairperson

During his fall 2022 commencement remarks, WIU President Dr. Guiyou Huang stated that, at its core, “Western Illinois University is about access and opportunity.” I was struck by how perfectly this statement truly encapsulates the mission of Western Illinois University and of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCESS

Our commitment to educational access is illustrated in the efforts of our programs to provide educational access to underserved populations in our region and beyond.

While our office is located on the Macomb campus, the department has served students at the QC campus for many years. For decades, faculty members traveled to the QC campus to offer weekend courses. Today, Dr. Tammy Werner teaches full-time on the QC campus to serve students in both the Sociology and Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) programs.

An early adopter of online learning, our department has offered courses to students online for more than two decades. Our commitment to access goes back even further, including telecourse and correspondence courses that date back to at least the 1970s. In addition, we provide course credit for students participating in study abroad and semester-at-sea programs.

Our Anthropology program was the first approved online BA program at an Illinois public institution in 2017. Two years later, our Sociology program earned the same distinction when it rolled out its own online BA program. Both are nationally ranked as top online BA programs.

The MA in Sociology program has provided access to graduate study for students in our region and around the globe. Our program structure has always reflected an emphasis on providing access to traditional and non-traditional students, offering primarily evening courses. More recently, we have expanded the number of hybrid and online courses being offered. In addition, the program was recently revised to provide greater flexibility in program completion options.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OPPORTUNITY

Our Sociology and Anthropology programs personify opportunity, with a myriad of experiences for our students, from study abroad courses to service learning projects. The WIU Archaeology Field School has provided students with hands-on learning in archaeological field and lab methods for more than 20 years. This year, we were able to secure space for a new Archaeology lab, which allows our students to work on faculty and student driven research projects.

The 2020 revision of the BA in the Sociology program added a capstone requirement for the major. Students now complete an internship, honors thesis, or individual investigations project as a culminating experience. The capstone provides opportunities for our students to engage in academic and career exploration with a faculty mentor.

I am incredibly proud of the history, present, and future of our departmental programs. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology is the embodiment of President Huang’s comments on the heart of WIU’s mission: **access and opportunity**.

Sociology and Anthropology at Western Illinois University

Fall Department Scholars

SOCIOLOGY *Susan Crawford*



I am a senior, majoring in sociology and minoring in psychology. I live in Quincy, Illinois and have been an online student at WIU since the Fall of 2020. I graduated in December 2019 with my associates from John Wood Community College.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I decided to utilize the opportunity to earn a four-year degree online. I initially chose sociology as my major because it was the one that was closest to psychology that I could earn completely online. I knew by the end of my first semester at WIU, that I had made the right decision and have enjoyed every class I have taken ever since. What I liked most about the program at WIU was that the staff was genuine in their care and commitment of the success of their students. It was why I chose WIU in the first place.

My degree in sociology has enhanced not only my professional life, but my personal one as well. Understanding society and social behavior is instrumental to achieving and maintaining necessary social change. Studying sociology and the loss of my oldest son to an accidental opioid overdose redirected the path of the second half of my career to where I have recently added working as a second job at a local in-patient addiction rehabilitation treatment center.

I am finishing my degree after 28 years and raising my children. When I started, I didn't have children and I will graduate as a grandma. My goal after graduation is to continue to build upon what I have learned and to give back by applying that knowledge.

ANTHROPOLOGY *Chloe Jones*



My name is Chloe, and I'm a senior at Western Illinois University. I plan to graduate in December with a degree in Anthropology with an emphasis in Archaeology.

I chose Anthropology as my major because I've always been interested in learning about all sorts of different peoples and cultures. This degree has been absolutely perfect for me! I was given the opportunity to participate in an archeological dig at the Orendorf site, which has inspired me to continue working in archaeology. I plan to use my degree to either travel and participate in more digs, or work in a museum where I can continue to learn about different cultures.



Congratulations!

to our fall 2022 Graduates

MA Sociology

Ojonimi Salihu & Ryan Warren

BA Anthropology

Chloe Jones & Erinn Heaton

BA Sociology

Susan Crawford, Ashlie Doney
Mya Richardson-Hellenthal, &
Kenneth Quiroz-Martinez Jr.

Sociology and Anthropology at Western Illinois University

WIU Alumnus Launches DEI Internship Fund*

Tyler Leibnitz, a WIU sociology graduate student from Huntley (IL), named the inaugural recipient of the Randall & Delores Lindsey DEI Internship.

Western's newest internship program, which focuses on justice, inclusion, diversity and equity, is on its way to being fully funded, thanks to Randall Lindsey, a 1965 graduate. Lindsey, and his wife, Delores, recently established the Randall and Delores Lindsey DEI Internship Program to support students and causes in the areas of justice, inclusion, diversity and equity. When fully funded, the DEI internship program will provide a minimum of three paid internships annually, in the form of graduate assistantships. Preference will be given to at least one student from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, one student from the School of Education and one student from the University at large. Students will work with their respective internship coordinator and their department to identify a project focusing on justice, inclusion, diversity, and equity.

"It is an honor to have been chosen for this opportunity to impact the community in a positive way while continuing the development of my research experience. As someone that initially struggled to find a college major that I felt passionate about, I am excited to be involved in a project that will potentially introduce more people to a wider range of social issues that need urgent attention," Leibnitz said. "If we can help educators spark an interest in diversity, equality and inclusion in the younger population, then some of those students and educators may discover meaningful academic and professional paths that would have otherwise been overshadowed by more traditional corporate ideologies."

As the inaugural Lindsey DEI Intern, Leibnitz plans to focus on gathering data from regional schools toward the development of a professional development experience for high school educators teaching in social sciences/social studies on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Three departments in the College of Arts and Sciences - sociology and anthropology, political science and EAGIS (earth, atmospheric & geographic information sciences) - are working together on this initiative.

"I first taught Tyler as an undergraduate in our program a decade ago, and his experience with project management, training and relationship development makes him the ideal selection as our first DEI intern and for our initial project," added Tawnya Adkins-Covert, sociology and anthropology chair. "I am grateful for the Lindseys' generosity and am thrilled to be working with our first DEI intern. The internship will provide an invaluable hands-on learning experience for WIU students, as well as make a significant contribution to our community and region."

According to Randall, as a first generation college student and graduate, establishing the internship has been a dream to support the next generation. He earned his degree in education and social studies from WIU, and went on to teach at the college level. An emeritus professor at California State University, Los Angeles, Randall has a practice centered in educational consulting and issues related to equity and access. Prior to working in higher education, he was a junior and senior high school history teacher, a district office administrator for school desegregation and executive director of a non-profit corporation.

"Throughout the years, my experiences have been in working with diverse populations and my area of study is the behavior of white people in multicultural settings. It's my belief, and experience, that all too often, white people are observers of multicultural issues rather than personally involved with them," he added. "Delores and I started the Randall and Delores Lindsey DEI Internship Program at WIU to further the classroom and experiential learning opportunities for WIU students."

Carl Ervin, acting director of the WIU Multicultural Center and interim director of the Office of Justice, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity, noted that the Lindsey internship provides new opportunities for students.

"Through this generous donation we are able to expand and enhance scholarship in DEI and continue to move forward the WIU commitment to and embrace of social justice and equity as critical components of the educational experience," Ervin said.

For more information about the WIU Department of Sociology and Anthropology, visit [wiu.edu/cas/sociology_and_anthropology/](https://www.wiu.edu/cas/sociology_and_anthropology/).



Randall Lindsey, ('65 WIU graduate) and Delores Lindsey



Tyler Leibnitz, MA in Sociology student

* Article reprinted from University Relations press release, dated September 12, 2022.

Sociology and Anthropology at Western Illinois University

Sociology Graduate Program Notes



**Dr. Gordon Chang,
Graduate Advisor**

Our Graduate internship exit option track has proven to provide students with considerable success.

After finishing her theory-oriented thesis on social movements in Spring 2022, **Christina Cottle** landed a position (Methods and Procedures Career Associate Trainee) in the Bureau of Water within the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, headquartered in Springfield, Illinois. Environmental organizations certainly need their chemists and biologists, but they can also use sociologists to prepare reports, gather and process data, and facilitate organizational operation.

Carolina Lopez completed her exit option with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America this past summer. Her paper contemplates the nature of the self, the meaning of youth development, the role of a “mentor” (the concept of the “big brother” and “big sister”) that is envisioned by the organization,

and what interactions and activities are in place to foster institutionalization. She also had other related experiences with summer camps and the Casa Latina Cultural Center. She is now Youth Program Manager for Leadership, a non-profit youth organization in Lagrange, IL.

Most recently in Fall 2022, our M.A. student **Ryan Warren**, a Peace Corp Fellow and who completed an internship with McDonough County non-profit organization Good Food Collaborative, has been hired as Director of Development for the Special Olympics of Kansas. During her exit option presentation, she told the audience of the food security challenges that have plagued Macomb residents in recent years, and how organizations like the Good Food Collaborative have helped to amass resources and deliver essential to needy families during the pandemic. Being able to work for the same organization—way past what the Internship required hours—has afforded her to experience playing multiple roles, interact with multiple constituents and clients, and handle up-and-down cycles. All of these experiences have been instrumental for her to be competitive for the highly desired position.

All these successful cases for the Internship exit option are interesting in one way: they all end up with well-placed positions that neither they nor many faculty members could predict with precision. Our program excels at giving students a well-rounded training through courses and an opportunity to specialize. However, which theoretical orientation or practical skills would be important to analyze or solve problems in a field or what opportunities will surface after graduation are not pre-determined matters. This is quite different from other fields in which the set of professional knowledge and skills is rather standard. In this situation, it is beneficial for students learn a range of theoretical and methodological models, applying them across topics and institutional fields. A theory of small groups in symbolic interactionist sociology can be applied to the contexts of criminal justice, religious movements, and drug recovery programs.

Methodological competence in systematic investigations, whether qualitative or quantitative, is important in the practical world of work.

Coupled with the well-rounded training, gaining on-the-ground experience is another key. Being an intern as a sociology student is not simply doing technical, repetitive work for an organization. Rather, our interns are sociological analysts and practitioners once they are on the ground. They are immersed into the life and structure of an organization, being prompted to “see” and “work through” various scenarios and circumstances. How may human actors mitigate or perpetuate challenging problems? What to do when an organization works with imperfect data or handles unstable funding streams or labor supply? By periodically consulting with faculty mentors and interacting with field supervisors, students develop various frameworks to make sense of various happenings. There is never a standard “textbook” or a clear “rule book” to solve or see problems on the ground, but there are always organizational members who are more competent than others. Internships give students a rare chance to acquire or deepen this kind of competence within various fields of professional practice. If the successful placements are our guide, the employing agencies are confident in our M.A. graduates for the competence that they have acquired.

Sociology and Anthropology at Western Illinois University

Faculty Notes

Recent Awards and Recognitions

- **Dr. Jacob Skousen, Dr. Christina Davis, and Dr. Heather McIlvaine-Newsad** have each been awarded Provost's Travel Awards to cover costs related to conducting and presenting their research.
- **Dr. Lora Wallace** has been awarded a University Research Council's Summer Stipend for Summer 2023 to support her research project: "A Halloween Stigma Assessment and Mental Health Beliefs Among University Students."
- **Dr. Jacob Skousen** was selected to receive the Department of Sociology & Anthropology's Faculty Research and Travel Award.



Thank you to our generous alumni and donors for funds used to reconfigure Morgan 318 Classroom into a lab and seminar classroom space.



We love to hear from our Alumni!

DROP US A LINE OR
CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

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