

Media Relations

UNH Holden Lecture Focuses On Interdisciplinarity At American Universities Oct. 12

October 4, 2010



Jerry Jacobs, professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, will present the Holden Lecture at UNH.

DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire welcomes Jerry Jacobs, a specialist in women’s employment and employment inequity, who will discuss the growing trend of interdisciplinarity on American college campuses at the annual Holden Lecture Oct. 12, 2010.

“Interdisciplinarity, Specialization, and the Intellectual Map of the 21st Century University” takes place at 12:40 p.m. in Demeritt 112. The lecture is sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Department of Sociology, and is free and open to the public.

Academic disciplines, departments, and majors are a familiar fixture of colleges and universities in the United States, but in recent years the status of these basic units has come under scrutiny. The banner of interdisciplinarity has been raised from major research universities to small liberal arts colleges, from the grant committees of the National Institutes of Health to the annual meetings of the American Studies Association. In this lecture, Jacobs, professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, attempts to separate the wheat from the chaff regarding claims made on behalf of interdisciplinarity.

Do disciplines represent isolated silos that inhibit the flow of ideas and stifle innovation? Does interdisciplinarity tend to result in the synthesis of ideas from different sources or instead does it tend to result in the proliferation of new academic niches? Have the traditional liberal arts disciplines run their course, or will they still play a central role in the 21st century university? Jacobs will pursue these and related questions in an effort to understand the social organization of ideas, research, and college degrees.

Jacobs is a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he has taught since earning his Ph.D. in sociology at Harvard in 1983. He has served as the editor of the *American Sociological Review* and the president of the Eastern Sociological Society. He is the author of five books, including “*The Time Divide: Work, Family and Gender Inequality*,” published by Harvard University Press in 2004, and 75 research papers. His studies have addressed a number of aspects of women’s employment, including authority, earnings, working conditions, part-time work and work-family conflict, and entry into male-dominated occupations. He is currently studying communication among scholars across disciplinary boundaries, and has begun an initiative to create an interdisciplinary Society for Work and Family Research.

The Holden Lecture is supported by the John T. Holden Memorial Fund in the College of Liberal Arts, which was established in 1995 in memory of John Holden, one of the university’s outstanding teachers of political science, who served that department for 25 years, many as chair. The fund is dedicated to bringing signal scholars in the social sciences to UNH. Past Holden speakers have included James Alan Fox, the Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University; Lance Bennett, the Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communications and Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington; Stanley Katz, professor of international affairs at Princeton University; and William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geysler University Professor at Harvard University.

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