



FEATURED FACULTY INTERVIEW

Cindy Isenhour, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

What aspect of your current work excites you the most?

I'm currently finishing up a research project on the policy implications of Sweden's "Generational Goal" - which states that Sweden will improve its environment at home, but not at the expense of environmental degradation elsewhere. In a global economic system with growing levels of international trade – such an ambitious policy is quite tricky to implement.

While Sweden cannot control the emissions associated with the products and services they import without creating significant trade tensions, my research has traced Sweden's attempts to achieve their generational goal through consumer education programs at home and via projects designed to provide environmental technologies to producing countries like China (largely through Kyoto's Clean Development Mechanism).

As an anthropologist interested in economic and environmental policy, the focus on Sino-Scandinavian climate cooperation has proven incredibly interesting. It allows me to explore how unique cultures, histories and global political positions influence environmental risk perception, policy response and willingness to cooperate internationally.

Have you discovered any drawbacks or advantages to being a woman scientist?

I've been quite lucky in my career – and have not personally experienced or perceived any sort of gender-based discrimination. That said, I have several colleagues whose experiences are, unfortunately, quite different than my own.

Which women scientists do you admire?

Many! I tend to most admire the "great synthesizers" – both men and woman who have tackled very large and messy bodies of literature in an attempt to draw out patterns and translate the findings into a form that can be understood by a wider audience (and potentially influence public opinion and policy). Women who come to mind first are greats like Rachel Carson, Theo Colburn, and Elinor Ostrom. Within my own field of anthropology I admire Barbara Rose Johnston who has done some incredible synthesis on environmental justice issues and engaged in both policy discussions and public outreach.

Talk about professional networking – how important is it?

Professional networks are *extremely* important for intellectual and professional development. Interactions with scholars studying similar questions (both in my field and in other disciplines) have provided me with essential feedback on my research trajectory, new understandings of methodological approaches, fresh analytical frames and opportunities for collaboration. My network is entirely the result of travel to professional conferences. As much as I hate to admit it (given the climate and environmental impact of long-distance travel), there is no replacement for personal contact with colleagues who share one's research interests.

What has been the highlight of your time here at UMaine?

There are many “mini-highlights” of my past year - all linked to the discovery of shared interests with other faculty and students across campus. I was attracted to the Department of Anthropology at UMaine, in part, because the faculty have such strong interdisciplinary ties with other programs (e.g. Forestry, Marine Sciences, the Climate Change Institute, the Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, the School of Policy and International Affairs). I sincerely enjoy interdisciplinary and applied research collaborations - so my “highlight” is the aggregation of those little discoveries of shared interests. AND I can't forget to mention that a book I've been working on for several years FINALLY went into production!

Have a cool idea you would like to share?

Since moving to Maine I've been intrigued by the vibrancy of the repair, reuse and resale economy (from yard sales and ski swaps to Uncle Henry's). These “alternative” economies - focused on second hand goods and often reciprocal exchange - not only save people money but, in most cases, significantly reduce environmental/climate impacts by removing demand for new production and the associated inputs of energy, water and virgin resources (not to mention keeping stuff out of the waste stream). Significant research also suggests that the social exchange networks associated with these alternative economies reduce vulnerability to market and environmental shocks. I'm interested in formulating a research project on the culture and value (widely defined) of Maine's alternative economic institutions and ways that environmental and economic policy might work to support, incentivize and invest in this already vibrant and highly valuable economy. *I'm looking for collaborators!*

