

Tom Wooten

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Employment:

Louisiana State University
Assistant Professor of Sociology

2024-

Harvard University
College Fellow, Department of Sociology

2022-2024

Education:

Ph.D. in Sociology, Harvard University, 2022
Dissertation Committee: Mary C. Waters (Chair), Mario Small, Jocelyn Viterna

M.A. in Sociology, Harvard University, 2015

B.A. in Social Studies, Harvard College, 2008, *Magna Cum Laude*

Papers:

Wooten, Tom. 2024. "Effort Traps: Socially Structured Striving and the Reproduction of Disadvantage." *American Journal of Sociology* 130(2): 344-383.

- James Coleman Award for the Best Article in the field of Sociology of Education, ASA Sociology of Education Section, 2025 co-winner

Wooten, Tom. 2022. "‘If it don’t kill you, it’ll take away your life’: survival strategies and isolation in a long-running gun conflict." *Criminology* 60(4): 1-25.

Books:

Effort Traps: Poverty, College, and the Elusive American Dream (book manuscript in progress)

- Ethnographic study that follows eight young Black men from low-income families in New Orleans through their senior year of high school and attempted first year of college
- Book combines vivid narration with careful sociological analysis, describing previously unidentified mechanisms of social reproduction
- Under advance contract at The University of Chicago Press

Wooten, Tom. 2012. *We Shall Not Be Moved: Rebuilding Home in the Wake of Katrina*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Reviewed or profiled in: *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio's *The Reading Life*, *The Times-Picayune*, *YES! Magazine*, *ForeWord Reviews*, *Prism Magazine*, *New Orleans Offbeat Podcast*
- Starred review from *Booklist*
- Nonfiction Book of the Year for 2013, New Orleans Library Foundation
- 2014 Japanese language translation published by Akashi Shoten

Sandesara, Utpal and Tom Wooten. 2011. *No One Had a Tongue to Speak: The Untold Story of One of History's Deadliest Floods*. New York: Prometheus Books.

- Reviewed or profiled in: *Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *New Jersey Star Ledger*, *Businessworld*, *The Sunday Indian*, *Business Standard*, *Time Out Mumbai*, *OPEN Magazine*, *Outlook India*, *Caravan Magazine*, *Sandesh*, *Divya Bhaskar*, *Phulchhab*, *Akila*, *Gujarat Samachar*, *Harvard Magazine*, *Penn Medicine Magazine*
- 2012 English language Indian edition by Rupa Publications
- 2015 Gujarati language translation published by Pravin Prakashan
- Inspired the 2023 Gujarati-language movie *Machhbhu*

Fellowships, Grants, and Awards:

2025 - James Coleman Award for Best Article in the field of Sociology of Education, co-winner
 2024 - Harvard Pforzheimer Fellowship (with Charlotte Baker)
 2017 - National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant
 2016 - Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies Student Research Support Program Grant
 2016 - Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Merit Term-Time Fellowship
 2015 - Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Summer Predissertation Fellowship
 2014 - Harvard Center for American Political Studies Seed Grant
 2014 - Invited as a "Leader of Tomorrow" to the 44th St. Gallen Symposium in Switzerland
 2013 - Harvard Inequality & Social Policy Doctoral Fellowship
 2013 - National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Honorable Mention
 2012 - Forbes Magazine "30 Under 30," Law and Policy list
 2008 - Neighborhood Recovery Research Fellowship, Harvard Kennedy School
 2007 - New Orleans Service Grant, Edward M. Lamont Public Service Fellowship at Harvard College
 2006 - South Asia Research Fellowship, Harvard Asia Center & South Asia Initiative
 2005 - World Teach South Africa Service Fellowship, Harvard Center for International Development,
 2004 - Public Service Fellowship, Rotary Club of Winchester, MA

Invited Lectures and Panels

"Social Causes and Social Consequences of Engineering Failures: The Case of the Machhu Dam-II Disaster"

- Professional Development Webinar, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, 2020
- Keynote Address, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, 2019

"Pushed Out: Residents Displaced by Gentrification in Post-Katrina New Orleans"

- Keynote Panel, Walk / Bike / Places Conference, New Orleans, 2018

"University-Community Partnerships in Disaster Recovery"

- West Virginia Recovery Conference, Marshall University, 2017

“Life After Hurricane Katrina: The Resilience in Survivors of Katrina (RISK) Project”

- Katrina@10 Conference, Tulane School of Public Health, 2015

“Neighborhood-Based Recovery in New Orleans”

- University of Delaware Disaster Research Center, 2013
- Hampshire College, 2012
- Broadmoor Neighborhood, New Orleans, 2012

“Post-Katrina Recovery in Perspective: Lessons for Future Disasters”

- National Homeland Security Conference, Los Angeles, 2013

“The Machhu Dam Disaster: Social Origins and Social Consequences”

- Morbi City Hall, Gujarat, India, 2015
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 2012
- South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers, and People, Delhi, 2012
- University of Pennsylvania Preceptorial, 2012

“Writing Narrative Nonfiction”

- University of the Sciences, Philadelphia, 2012

Workshop and Conference Presentations

“The Effort Trap: An Ethnography of Trying and Failing to Get Ahead”

- “Money Matters: Low-Income Students, Financial Aid, and Work” Session, American Education Research Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, 2023
- “Education Policy and Reform: Strategies and Shortcomings” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 2022
- Harvard Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, 2019
- Harvard Sociology Out of Town Grad Student Symposium, 2019

“Social Amputation: Staying Alive in Long-Running Gun Conflicts”

- “Research on Deviance and Social Control” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, New York, NY, 2019

“Walking the Tightrope: Structure, Agency, and the Precariousness of Attempted Upward Mobility”

- Eastern Sociological Society Conference, 2019
- Sociology of Education Workshop, University of Pennsylvania, 2018

“Gun Violence and Social Isolation in New Orleans”

- Urban Sociology Round Table, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, 2018
- Harvard Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, 2018

“Extracurriculars and the Construction of Personal Authenticity”

- “Culture and Inequality” Regular Session, American Sociological Association Annual Conference, 2017

- Mixed Methods Workshop, Harvard University, 2016

“An Ethnography of the Transition to College for Low-Income Students”

- Workshop on Urban Social Processes, Harvard University, 2015

“Economic Conditions and Status Salience” with Nathan Wilmers

- Quantitative Methods Workshop, Harvard University, 2014

“Extracurricular Life at an Elite College”

- Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, Harvard University, 2014

“What Makes a Successful Recovery Effort?”

- Harvard-MIT Economic Sociology Workshop, 2013

Teaching and Advising

2024- Courses Taught at LSU

- Sociology 4462: Youth and Crime
- Sociology 4469: Race and the Criminal Legal System
- Sociology 7903: Graduate Proseminar
- Sociology 7213: Qualitative Research Methods

2024- Graduate Students Advised at LSU

- Tarikat Khan (co-chair), Myrissa Esworth, Marine Harutyunyan, Rita Kagaju, Samantha Ramey, Nunnally Zhou

2020-2024 Courses Taught at Harvard

- Sociology 1107: Contemporary Ethnography
- Sociology 1197: Poverty in the United States
- Sociology 98we, Sociology 98wf: small research seminars for juniors
- Sociology 3305: Graduate Teaching Practicum

2017-2024 Senior Thesis Adviser at Harvard

- Charlotte Baker (Social Studies, Class of 2024) – “Judges, Loved Ones, and Bondsmen: An Ethnography of Cash Bail in a Southern U.S. City.” Won the Captain Jonathan Fay Prize, awarded to the top three undergraduate theses at Harvard College. Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.
- Elise Collin (Social Studies, Class of 2022) – “The Dawn of a New Curriculum: Obstacles to the Implementation of Ethnic Studies.”
- Maison Jobe (Social Studies, Class of 2022) – “Out in the Cold: Making Ends Meet in Rural Minnesota.”
- Yifan Chen (Sociology, Class of 2021) – Project about experiences of young adult immigrants in the United States.
- Trevor Ladner (Sociology, Class of 2020) – “Blackness on the Whiteboard: Teaching Race and Racism in Mississippi Social Studies Education.” Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.

- Nicholas Albert (Social Studies, Class of 2020) – “If Not for Us, Then for Whom? How Gentrification Shapes Perceptions of Recovery in Post-Katrina New Orleans.”
- Quinn Mulholland (Sociology, Class of 2018) – “Solitary in Suburbia: The Social Networks of Suburban Voucher Holders in Atlanta.” Won the Thomas T. Hoopes prize for outstanding undergraduate theses.

2014-2015 Teaching Fellow at Harvard

- Sociology 177: Poverty in America with Matthew Desmond
- United States and the World 31: American Society and Public Policy with Mary Waters and Theda Skocpol
- SUP 606 Disaster Recovery Management: Rebuilding Cities After Disaster, Harvard Kennedy School with Doug Ahlers

2012-2015; 2019-2021 Resident Tutor in Quincy House, Harvard College

- As fellowships tutor, advised winners of Rhodes Scholarship, Marshall Scholarship, Mitchell Scholarship, Fulbright Scholarship, Truman Scholarship, Schwarzman Scholarship, and numerous Harvard-specific fellowships.
- 2014 winner of the Harvard Foundation’s Race Relations Advisor Award, “for outstanding contributions to intercultural and race relations at Harvard College.”
- Nominated for the Marquand Award for excellence in undergraduate advising for the 2012-2013 school year.

2009-2011 Middle School Writing Teacher, KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts

- Teach for America Greater New Orleans Corps Member

Academic Service

Reviewer, *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Sociology of Education*, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*

2019 Founder, Harvard Sociology Out-of-Town Graduate Student Working Group

2018 Graduate Student Research Team Leader, Forward Together New Orleans

- Helped support a resident-led effort to advise incoming mayor LaToya Cantrell on her first-term priorities.
- Recruited students from Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard Graduate School of Design with needed subject matter expertise to conduct research for resident-led committees.

2014-2015 Co-Coordinator, Harvard Migration and Immigrant Incorporation Workshop

Public Sociology

“The Long Homecoming: Ten Years After Hurricane Katrina”

- *Beacon Broadside*. August 29, 2015. (<http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2015/08/the-long-homecoming-ten-years-after-hurricane-katrina.html>)

“Rebuilding After Sandy: Lessons from the Gulf Coast”

- *GOOD*. December 12, 2012. (<http://www.good.is/posts/sandy-refugees-the-world-s-leading-experts-on-rebuilding-their-homes>)

“Jungleland or Grassroots Recovery? The Lower Ninth Ward as a Symbol of Hope”

- *Beacon Broadside*. March 28, 2012. (<http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2012/03/jungleland-or-grassroots-recovery.html>)

“Three Lessons in Emergency Management from Someone Who Did It Well”

- *History News Network*. August 29, 2011. (<http://hnn.us/article/141433>)