

In Memoriam

Dr. Gwynne Nettler, FRSC Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology (1913 – 2007)

Before receiving his PhD in social psychology from Stanford University in 1946, Gwynne Nettler had already been employed as a Hollywood stuntman, a radio commentator, an industrial psychologist, and a clinical psychologist. He taught at a number of prestigious US universities before joining the University of Alberta's Sociology department in 1963. Following his appointment, he was quickly promoted to Full Professor in 1966. He remained a member of the department until he retired in 1978. By then, he had established himself as one of North America's pre-eminent criminologists.

Both undergraduate and graduate students remember Gwynne Nettler for his polished and provocative lectures as well as his conservative opinions. Even if the latter did not fit with some students' views, the former were always a delight and a challenge. While at the University of Alberta, Dr. Nettler taught thousands of undergraduates, many of whom would remember him as an exceptional teacher, and supervised scores of graduate students who have gone on to illustrious scholarly careers and senior government positions.

Dr. Nettler helped shape North American criminology over a five-decade period. He published provocative and influential papers in top-ranked sociology journals. In 1970, his book Explanations began its decades-long career as staple reading in upper-year criminology and philosophy of social science courses across the continent. He continued to research and write, publishing eight more books, including many after he retired. His last book, Boundaries of Competence: How Social Sciences Make Feeble Science, appeared when he was 90 years old.

Not surprisingly, given how long he remained active as a scholar, many of Dr. Nettler's major awards and honours appeared after he retired in 1978. He received the E. H. Sutherland Award from the American Society of Criminology in 1982 for his many contributions to the discipline, and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada the same year. He continued to read and write and publish, and to serve as a public intellectual, a role he thoroughly enjoyed, for decades after retiring. Dr. Gwynne Nettler, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, died in San Diego, California on October 5, 2007, at age 94.

The Department of Sociology has purchased the following books to be placed in the University of Alberta library in memory of Dr. Nettler:

Godfrey, Barry S., Cox, David. J., and Farrall, Stephen. 2007. Criminal Lives: Family Life, Employment, and Offending. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kocsis, Richard N. (ed.) 2007. Criminal Profiling: International Theory, Research and Practice. Totowa, N.J.: Humana.

Shaw, Victor N. 2007. Crime and Social Control in Asia and the Pacific: A Cross-Border Study. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

The book plates will be inscribed as follows:

*In memory of Dr. Gwynne Nettler, FRSC
Professor of Sociology
Leader in the Field of Criminology*

March 5, 2008