9-6-2013

Press release : 2013 : 09 : 06 : Jay Sokolovsky wins national award for innovative aging research

Tom Scherberger

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.usfsp.edu/usfsp_news_press_releases

Recommended Citation
https://digital.usfsp.edu/usfsp_news_press_releases/528
USF St. Petersburg Anthropology Professor Jay Sokolovsky, Ph.D., has won a national award from the American Anthropological Association for his nearly four decades of groundbreaking research and leadership that led to the creation of a new area of study focused on aging.

Sokolovsky, coordinator of the USFSP Anthropology Program, will receive the 2013 Robert B. Textor and Family Prize for Excellence in Anticipatory Anthropology during the American Anthropological Association’s annual meeting in November. The award honors pioneering contributions in anthropology that encourage informed policy choices.

Before Sokolovsky began studying impoverished elders living in single room occupancy hotels in Midtown Manhattan in 1974, aging was not recognized as a subspecialty among
anthropologists. “It was considered an off the wall topic,” Sokolovsky recalls. “Until the late ‘70s or early ‘80s, aging wasn’t a dignified place for anthropologists to work in.” Other anthropologists discouraged him from focusing on aging, he says.

Sokolovsky pressed on, developing some of the first university courses on the subject, writing the primary textbook in the field used at 70 universities, working as the founding editor of a book series on aging, co-organizing and leading the Association for Anthropology and Gerontology and presenting at conferences around the world and at the United Nations.

Today the American Anthropological Association Interest Group on Aging and the Life Course, which he helped found, boasts 750 members.

“For over three decades, Jay has labored to direct anthropological attention toward late life maturity as both a process that all human populations experience and the lived experience of older citizens,” wrote Dena Shenk, Ph. D., director of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Gerontology Program, in a letter nominating Sokolovsky for the Textor award. “I have been witness not only to his literally helping chart a new subfield of anthropology....but also benefitted from his mentorship early on in my career.”

“I am especially honored to be recognized by my professional peers, who when I began doing research on aging more than two decades ago, warned me that I should direct my intellectual energy in other areas,” Sokolovsky said. He has has been invited to be a keynote speaker on Global Aging at the Open University in Barcelona in November.

Sokolovsky has been at USF St. Petersburg since 1996. He came to Florida in 1993 as a National Institute on Aging Senior Research Professor in the Department of Aging and Mental Health at the Florida Mental Health Institute. He conducted a study of how different ethnic communities in the Tampa Bay area dealt with symptoms of dementia among family members.

He earned a master’s degree and Ph.D. from Penn State University and a B.A. from Brooklyn College. He is the author of The Cultural Context of Aging, Growing Old in Different Societies, Teaching the Anthropology of Aging, Old Men of the Bowery and Indigenous Mexico Engages the 21st Century (to be published in 2014).

“We are fortunate to have one of anthropology’s intellectual leaders on our faculty,” said Vivian Fueyo, interim regional vice chancellor for academic affairs. “Dr. Sokolovsky is an example of the kind of world-class scholarship we enjoy at USFSP and our students are the greatest beneficiaries.”

Related News

Posted in:
College of Arts & Sciences
Faculty Highlights