

Sarah Babb
Research/Areas of Specialization

Areas of Specialization: Economic Sociology, Political Sociology, Comparative and Historical Sociology, Organizations, Globalization, Latin America.

Research: Professor Babb's main research interest is in the sociology of economic ideas. Some of her early work focused on debates and social movements surrounding monetary policy in the U.S. in the decades immediately following the Civil War. Her doctoral dissertation and book, *Managing Mexico*, examine historical changes in the economics profession in Mexico over the course of the 20th century. As elsewhere in Latin America, in Mexico, U.S.-trained economists were key actors in the promotion of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and 90s. In a recent article, Babb explores the question of why the International Monetary Fund developed a conservative anti-inflationary doctrine in the early postwar period, when Keynesian thinking was predominant.

Current Projects: The Banks and the Beltway: Three Decades of Washington Politics and World Development

Sarah Babb spent AY 2005-06 at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars studying U.S. policy toward the multilateral development banks since the 1970s. The multilateral development banks (or “the MDBs”) are organizations that are famous for promoting particular models of economic development. And yet, the policies of the World Bank and other MDBs are not developed by the banks alone. The banks’ most influential shareholders are the national governments that contribute the most to their financing: the U.S., Japan, Great Britain, and France. The U.S. is the banks’ most active shareholder, and has almost always been in the lead of initiatives to shape the MDBs’ policies. Babb’s research and forthcoming book draws on Congressional discussions of the multilateral development banks to explore how U.S. policy has evolved over the past three decades—and how Washington politics shapes dominant ideas about economic development.