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Howard, George Elliott (1849–1928)

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George Elliott Howard, a distinguished social scientist trained initially in history, rose to the presidency of the American Sociological Society in 1917. Howard earned the A.B. in 1876 at the University of Nebraska. Following two years of advanced study in Germany, Howard joined the Nebraska faculty in 1879. Howard's most prominent Nebraska student from this period, Amos Griswold Warner, later wrote *American Charities* (1894) – a standard classic in the field. Howard was named to the prestigious “First Faculty” of Stanford University in 1891.

At Stanford, when sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross was summarily fired in 1900 by university president David Star Jordan, Howard immediately defended Ross's right to free speech. Jordan demanded Howard's apology – or his resignation. Howard resigned, as did other Stanford faculty members in sequence. Instantly, Ross was hired by chancellor E. Benjamin Andrews to teach sociology at the University of Nebraska. The so-called “Ross

affair" at Stanford resulted ultimately in the founding of the American Association of University Professors and the establishment of academic tenure in American universities.

After a series of brief appointments, including the University of Chicago (1903–4), Howard returned in 1904 to the University of Nebraska, where his colleagues included Edward A. Ross and Roscoe Pound. In 1906, with Ross's departure for the University of Wisconsin, Howard was named head of Nebraska's newly reorganized Department of Political Science and Sociology. Howard was an egalitarian, activist, and humane sociologist who championed women's suffrage, encouraged racial tolerance, and advocated prohibition. An exacting scholar, Howard's elaborate published syllabi on *General Sociology* (1907), *Social Psychology* (1910), *Present Political Questions* (1913), *Marriage and Family* (1914), and other topics remain extraordinary models of rigorous instructional guidance. Howard's later Nebraska protégée, Hattie Plum Williams, earned her PhD in 1915, and in 1923 – with Howard's encouragement and endorsement – became, at Nebraska, the first woman in the world to chair a co-educational doctoral degree-granting department of sociology. Howard retired in 1924.

The author of scholarly books and dozens of professional articles, Howard is best known today for his massive *History of Matrimonial Institutions Chiefly in England and the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 1904). A quintessential study in the sociology of institutions (Howard claimed for himself the invention of "institutional history" as a category of study), *Matrimonial Institutions* merited critical appraisal from Émile Durkheim and provided the intellectual foundations for the 1906 National Congress on Uniform Divorce Laws.

SEE ALSO: American Sociological Association; Divorce; Marriage; Pound, Roscoe

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