

**Honorary degree from Harvard University awarded to Sarah Blaffer Hrdy on
June 4, 2009.**

Laudatio

Steve Hyman (provost):

Our next guest has challenged the idea that females are naturally selected to be submissive and coy.

She has challenged the conventional wisdom about the nature of a mother's love for her young.

She has challenged the assumption that females invariably vary less in their reproductive success than males do.*

In these ways and more, she has brought a daringly iconoclastic and deeply influential perspective to the study of evolution in primates, including humans.

A graduate of Radcliffe, with her PhD from Harvard, she launched her career studying the competitive and often violent behavior of langur monkeys in India.

When her own motherhood limited her opportunity for field research, she intensified her scholarly interest in the biology of motherhood and the nature of being female – drawing on evolutionary theory, anthropology, and psychology as well.

She has simply stated what drives her compelling scholarship: “to understand not just who I am, but how creatures like me came to be.”

In her latest book, *Mothers and Others*, she sheds new light on the origins of human beings' distinctive capacity for empathetic understanding

We welcome Sarah Blaffer Hrdy.

*Corrected from original

Drew Gilpin Faust (president): Interrogating Darwinian dogma, investigating primates' ways, an intrepid evolutionist with a revolutionary flair who has introduced us anew to Mother Nature.