FALL 2023 | ISSUE 16

BU Anthropology News

The official newsletter of the Boston University Department of Anthropology

FALL 2023

The Department of Anthropology is off to an exciting start this academic year. Our newly instituted Wednesday talk series launched with a well-attended presentation by VASTP Ben Finkel. A generous donation from BU alumnus supported a second Chinese Culture lecture with Dr. Erik Mueggler from the University of Michigan. We are looking forward to our second annual Barth lecture in the spring, made possible with Giving Day donations and an especially generous gift from Prof Tom Barfield; we are thrilled to announce that this year our speaker will be Dr. Anna Tsing from UC Santa Cruz. Last but not least, the Department is hiring a sociocultural anthropologist at the level of Assistant Professor. Be sure to check the Department website and our Facebook page Anthropology in the Works and follow us on Instagram for updates.

UPCOMING EVENTS

10.25 Department Talk - Kimberly Arkin - “Where do I Begin?!’ Locating and Exploring Ethnographic Puzzles as Writing Tool”

11.8 Professionalization Workshop - Title IX (Power Dynamics) - Konstantia Tatsis

11.29 Professionalization Workshop - Comprehensive Exams w/ Professors Hefner, Schmitt & West

12.6 Department Talk - Dr. Craig Cipolla, Dr. James Quinn, Dr. Jay Levy (Tufts) - "Collaborative Indigenous Archaeology at Mohegan"
HAZAL AYDIN
PhD Student Sociocultural Anthropology
Hazal Ayudin started her PhD at Koç University’s Design, Technology, and Society program, but decided to pursue her academic studies at BU Anthropology. She got her BA from Boğaziçi University Sociology Department and her MA from Koç University’s Comparative Studies in History and Society program. Her research interests focus on gender, sexuality, queer studies, affect and emotions, media studies, creative and culture industries, theatre and performance studies, political imagination, nationalism, and political Islam.

ISABEL BEACH
PhD Student Archaeological Anthropology
Isabel Beach’s research interests center around her home of coastal Southcentral Alaska and the numerous ways the botanical landscape has been shaped by its human inhabitants and, in return, how this landscape has shaped these peoples. Her inquiries regard anthropogenic plant introductions, from the Dena’ina Athabascan migration from interior landscapes to the coast, and from the Russian Colonial period.
NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS

JIMMY ERKENES
PhD Student Biological Anthropology

Jimmy Erkens is a first-year doctoral student working in the Sensory Morphology and Anthropological Genomics Lab (SMAGL). Under the advisement of Dr. Christopher Schmitt and Dr. Cheryl Knott, he is investigating St. Kitts green monkeys’ stress responses to anthropogenic pressures. He looks to compare populations of St. Kitts and West African green monkeys.

NICOLE HULTQUIST
PhD Student Archaeological Anthropology

Nicole Hultquist is a first year PhD student in Archaeology working with Dr. John Marston in the Environmental Archaeology Lab. Nicole is interested in using stable isotops systems to understand animal diets, their mobility, and the environment. Prior to coming to BU, Nicole graduated from the University of Maryland with a BS in Chemistry and a BS in Anthropology. Nicole then completed her MS in Anthropology at Trent University where she measured the strontium isotope ratios of camelids from the north coast of Peru to determine their mobility and geographic origin.

DAGNY MCCULLUMSMITH
Master of Public Anthropology Student

Dagny completed her undergraduate at Wellesley College, with a BA in Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences. She completed a Senior Thesis on the effects of syntax on the semantic interpretation of LGBTQ labels. Her research interests include linguistic anthropology, language revitalization, and the way that stories and storytelling builds and maintains culture.
NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS

SYEDA RUMANA MEHDI

*PhD Student Sociocultural Anthropology*

Rumana’s research centres around widows’ experiences of piety and how these are impacted by social status of widowhood. She examines this through the lens of shrine rituals in Pakistan and the notion that shrines are public sanctuaries known to challenge social norms and identities. Rumana is also interested in seeing how silence and mundanity of every-day rhythm plays out in the lives of widows and whether this has any impact in their spiritual and/or religious endeavors.

NICOLE MERULLO

*PhD Student Biological Anthropology*

Nicole Merullo is a first year PhD student working in Dr. Hodges-Simeon’s lab. She is broadly interested in how the hominin lineage evolved adaptations to internal anatomy and how those adaptations exist in today’s world. She plans on taking a genomic approach to compare the human genome and primate genomes to identify key gene and regulatory loci where the human lineage diverges. Before attending BU, Nicole completed her B.A. in Anthropology at George Washington University where she spent two years working on an ethnographic research project studying DC teens and their relationship to their cell phones.
Awards, Grants, Publications, Research

Hafsa Arain has a new article published in the *Journal of Gender Studies*, "Boy Cuts: Female Masculinity and Queer Aesthetics in Karachi, Pakistan".

Hazal Aydin’s paper, “Open Body, Theatrical Intimacy and Sexual Harassment: Understanding Gendered Embodiments Through Turkey’s Theatre Industry” has been selected as the winner of the 2023 MES Student Paper Prize.

Leyla Jafarova will be serving as a Digital Editorial Fellow with *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* (the Journal of the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology (APLA)) during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Leyla Jafarova was selected as one of 10 fellows (out of 93 applicants) for the SAPIENS Public Scholars Training Fellowship program, which guides anthropologists on accessible writing & podcasting for broad nonacademic audiences.

Leyla Jafarova’s film about their time doing ethnographic fieldwork in Azerbaijan was shown during the Sevil International Women’s Film Festival in Baku, Azerbaijan. It is the official selection for ETNOFF International Ethnographic Film Festival and Kratovo International Festival of Ethnological Documentary Film.

Trevor Lamb returned from doing fieldwork in Alaska where he found this incredible 3,000 year-old woven grass mat in an ancestral Alutiiq site (Click here for Press Release), and was featured on Alaska News Source’s In Depth Alaska. Click here for the video.

Sarah Lewinger received Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Summer Fellowship in Luganda.

Jess Martin received two awards for her summer research. University of Washington Summer Institutes in Statistics and Modeling in Infectious Diseases Scholarship Boston University Center for Innovation in Social Science Travel Award.
Samantha Nadel was awarded an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant for her project "Methodological Innovations in Studying Cash Crops and Globalization: An Organic Residue Analysis of Cochineal Production Tools from Colonial Mexico."

Johnathan Ray Norris received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) Fellowship.


Samantha Vee received an Exploration Fund Grant for her project “Effects of Human Disturbance on Bornean Orangutan Physiology.”

Tong Xin has received the 2023 OYCF-Chow Fellowship for Field Research in China.

Xuyi Zhao has a new publication in the *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, “I’m not a feminist, but … ” hegemonic femininities and women’s autonomy revisited in a Chinese university.

Niki Xenia Alygizou has received three prestigious awards for research: A Leventis Foundation Scholarship, a Sylvia Ioannou Foundation Scholarship and a Foundation for Education and European Culture grant.

Alumni News

Mehrdad Babadi (GRS ‘23) will be an Omar Khayyam Postdoctoral Research Associate in Iranian Studies this fall at Brown University's Center for Middle East Studies.

Carol Ferrara (GRS ‘19) was recently published in The Conversation: French schools’ ban on abayas and headscarves is supposedly about secularism – but it sends a powerful message about who ‘belongs’ in French culture.

Amy Scott (GRS'21) is a new mom to a healthy baby boy.

Emily Williamson Ibrahim (GRS'22) has accepted a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Kenyon College.
10.11 Contemporary Chinese Culture Lecture - The second annual lecture with Dr. Erik Mueggler was a success. This lecture series is generously funded by a graduate alumnus.

10.25 Department Talk - “Where do I Begin?! Locating & Exploring Ethnographic Puzzles as Writing Tools” - Dr. Kimberly Arkin (BU)

11.8 Professionalization Workshop - Title IX (Power Dynamics)
11.29 Professionalization Workshop - Comprehensive Exams
12.6 Department Talk - "Collaborative Indigenous Archaeology at Mohegan" - Dr. Craig Cipolla, Dr. James Quinn, Dr. Jay Levy (Tufts)
NEW FACULTY

BEN FINKEL
*Visiting Assistant Professor*

Ben Finkel is a biological anthropologist and primatologist with a focus on the evolution of senescence and life-history theory. His dissertation investigated the functional challenges of aging for wild chimpanzees at Ngogo in Uganda, where he has conducted field research since 2016. Ben’s research interests also include foraging behavior, dental wear, food mechanical properties, the social function of testosterone, and conservation psychology with a focus on media portrayal of primates. He is also keenly interested in the analysis and display of quantitative information and works extensively in R.

LAURA THOMPSON
*Visiting Assistant Professor*

Laura Anne Thompson is a cultural anthropologist focusing on Islam in North Africa. Her research sits at the intersection of the study of emotion, language, and the law. She is especially interested in how affective arguments can support claim-making and in how ethnography creatively attempts to capture the field. She is also interested in comedy, curses, hate speech, and offense. She is currently preparing her dissertation for publication and has previously published on contemporary and historical blasphemy cases in Tunisia.
Thomas Barfield has a new book out.

David Carballo has two recent publications:

Eva Garrett has a new publication in *Communications Biology*:

Frank Korom delivered a lecture at Keio University in Japan on October 19 on his current research on tensions between Buddhist nationalists and Sufis in Sri Lanka.

Catherine West produced a coloring book entitled Coloring Iqualluut - Fish that explores many aspects of Kodiak Alutiiq fishing, from the species caught to the seasonal rhythm of fishing and the tools used in harvesting. The publication features original drawings by Alutiiq artist Hanna Sholl, Alutiiq language vocabulary shared by Elder Alutiiq speakers, and a brief introduction to Alutiiq fishing. Press release.

Robert Weller has two recent publications:

Merry White has a new book out co-authored with her son, Ben Wurgaft:
ARE THERE ANY UPCOMING RESEARCH PROJECTS OR COLLABORATIONS THAT YOU’RE PARTICULARLY EXCITED ABOUT?

I have an ongoing collaborative project at one of the sites where I do research in St. Helena. There is a burial ground called Rupert’s Valley Burial Ground, from which the skeletal remains and artifacts of 325 "Liberated Africans" were excavated and later reburied. As part of the commemoration process, I am collaborating with St. Helenian and UK artists to create artistically and anatomically informed portraits to imagine what three of the people buried at the site may have looked like. This process is meant to be exploratory, in that we are creating several versions of each portrait to encourage reflection about the gaps in the historical record that exist for slave trade migration history.

Dr. Andree Cunningham joined Boston University in Fall 2023 as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Archaeology, and African American & Black Diaspora Studies. Her research focuses on African diaspora, migration history, non-invasive bioarchaeology, osteology, biosocial variation, interdisciplinary archaeology, and community-based research.

WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? WHAT’S IT LIKE BEING AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT BU?

Since I am brand new, so far it has looked like teaching; meeting and connecting with BU students, staff, and other faculty members; and setting up my office to feel homier. Being an assistant professor is a balancing act, with many projects, committees, classes, etc. happening simultaneously. It has been a learning curve for me, but it has also been very exciting.
FEATURED: ANDREANA CUNNINGHAM
Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Archaeology, African American & Black Diaspora Studies

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FIELD OF ANTHROPOLOGY EVOLVING IN THE COMING YEARS? ARE THERE ANY DEVELOPMENTS YOU’RE PARTICULARLY EXCITED ABOUT OR HOPE TO SEE COME TO FRUITION?

I see promise in the way anthropology is starting to critically consider inclusivity in citation, mentorship, and research practices. I am also excited to be present for the formation of groups that center and support the success of underrepresented scholars. I am a member of the Black in Biological Anthropology collective and the Society for Black Archaeologists, which both offer new ways of building community and contributing to the anthropological field. As a person who works with burial contexts, I am particularly excited to see biological anthropologists and bioarchaeologists grapple with the ethical ramifications of working with burials and the descendant communities associated with them.

ON YOUR WEBSITE, YOU SAY YOU LOVE TO PLAY VIDEO GAMES, DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITES? WHAT MAKES A VIDEO GAME FUN FOR YOU?

I love games that are story-driven with beautiful artwork and simple but effective gameplay. Some of my favorite games are Spiritfarer, Inside, and Eastward (and I've lately been fixated on Baldur's Gate III!). I tend to gravitate toward games that aren't high stress or combat-heavy, ones that allow you to sit back and explore the story and the rich details of the game world.

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH DR. CUNNINGHAM ON OUR WEBSITE
FEATURED: JOHNATHAN NORRIS
PhD Candidate, Sociocultural Anthropology

Johnathan Norris is a fifth year doctoral candidate, studying sociocultural anthropology. His research interests include the anthropology of emotions and affect; ethics and morality; queer anthropology; political anthropology, politics of safety, politics of care; migration and displacement.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW & WHAT YOU’RE STUDYING?
I am in Amman (the capital city), Jordan, in the Middle East right now. My research looks at emotions and ethics within the queer community here in Jordan. Specifically, I look at safety and identity and how those collide in how queer people adapt to the changing environment now, where there is increased anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, the increased police pressure, and just how emotions intersect with ethics and how that is changing the shape of what the queer community looks like.

CAN YOU SHARE ANY ADVICE FOR STUDENTS CONSIDERING STUDYING ANTHROPOLOGY?
One of the things I love about anthropology is the ability of an anthropologist to study widely. And even now, within anthropology, there’s kind of an openness to try and play with other theories. To look at novels and try to use them as a means of inspiration. Or how we can learn data science and data analytics and apply that to philosophy and gender studies. Something I would recommend is to retain creativity in your pursuit of knowledge and to know that no matter what brings you to anthropology, you could use all of it down the road, even if it is theology. That’s in part why I love our department. Not all departments are this way. Some are very focused on where you study anthropology in undergrad and then you maybe got a Masters in it and then you’re going for your PhD and it’s all very anthropological. In our department, we have former theology majors. It’s a nice intellectual space where we can all operate in our perspectives and the department fosters that.
FEATURED: JOHNATHAN NORRIS

HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR RESEARCH AND YOUR ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERESTS HAVE EVOLVED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATION?

It’s actually the story behind why I left theology and pastoral ministry. I was outed as a gay man, and I was fired from my church; my denomination took my credentials away, and I could no longer be a pastor. That led me to a period of deconstruction -- religious deconstruction. It was in that phase of deconstructing, leaving my religion, kind of becoming, you know, an atheist, stripped of any kind of compass; like when it comes to ethics and morals influencing our decisions and also emotions, that period for me was all about wrestling ethically. If I leave my religion, is there still an ethical system I can hold on to? What do I do now? And all the emotions that came into play and then just realizing how much of one's identity gets wrapped up into things like that and how much it affects everything. That's kind of where the questions begin.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE SPOTS AROUND CAMPUS?

Honestly, one of my favorite spots around campus is the grad student lounge, because it's just a great place to hang out. I like to work in the African Studies section of the Mugar Library. There is a corner where I like to work. I’ll write, I’ll grade, and it’s like two walled windows that overlook the Charles. So it’s like I can work and do what I got to do, but it’s a gorgeous view.

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH JOHNATHAN ON OUR WEBSITE
Jessica Martin is a second year PhD student, studying biological anthropology under the advisement of Dr. Christopher Schmitt in the Sensory Morphology and Anthropological Genomics Lab. Her dissertation research focuses on comparing the gut microbiomes of vervet monkeys living in two wild locations in South Africa.

**WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? WHAT’S IT LIKE BEING A GRAD STUDENT AT BU?**

Being a second-year Ph.D. student at BU can be quite exciting but also demanding, especially for those who are simultaneously taking classes and teaching.

9:00 AM: Arrive on campus and organize materials for the day's classes and teaching responsibilities.

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM: Teach or attend classes. I’m currently teaching the undergraduate course, Human Biology, Behavior, and Evolution.

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM: Break for lunch, network with peers, or engage in discussions with postdocs or professors.

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM: Participate in research activities, which may involve working in the lab, conducting experiments, analyzing data, or reading scientific articles.

7:00 PM: Wind down for the day, potentially engaging in additional studies, relaxation activities, or social interactions...

**WHAT ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH?**

My current research project involves investigating the gut microbiomes of wild vervet monkeys living in two locations in South Africa with fundamentally different diets: Soetdoring Nature Reserve, where the monkeys eat natural forage, and private farms near the Gariep Dam where the monkeys regularly supplement their diets with agricultural and human foods. The goal of this work will be to compare the microbial diversity of these two populations, adding in the effects of seasonal dietary variation, as well as establishing how disease conditions, like SIVagm status and parasitic infection, may disrupt the relationship between these dietary shifts over time, population, and gut communities in vervets.
I’VE NOTICED YOU DO A LOT OF VOLUNTEER WORK BOTH FOR BU GROUPS AND OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS, CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THAT?

I actively participate in several volunteer programs, both within the Boston University community and external organizations, as a part of my commitment to contributing to various causes. One of my involvements involves a nonprofit organization based in Cambridge called Science Club for Girls. To address inequities in STEM around race, gender, and socioeconomics, Science Club for Girls offers STEM activities for K-12 girls and gender-expensive youth. Additionally, within the BU community, I hold the position of the Graduate Student Organization secretary, graduate mentor in the Anthro In The Works mentor-mentee program, and recently volunteered to serve as a grant review committee representative.

HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR RESEARCH AND YOUR ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERESTS HAVE EVOLVED THROUGHOUT YOUR EDUCATION?

In college, I was a neuroscience and chemistry student aiming to go to medical school. However, it was during the pivotal juncture of preparing to submit my medical school applications in the Spring of 2020 that I took a reflective pause to reassess my ultimate goals. This contemplation prompted me to withdraw my medical school applications and embark on a gap year dedicated to self-exploration. It was during this time that I realized my true passion lay within the realm of research focused on the gut microbiome. As a little background during my senior year of high school, I was diagnosed with Crohn’s disease. The diagnosis set in motion the start of many gastroenterology appointments, medication regimens, and food elimination diets. This experience sparked my desire to learn more about the inner workings of the gastrointestinal tract. After digging deep into the scientific literature, I learned about the highly complex and diverse community of microbes living in the gastrointestinal tract and how disturbances in the microbiome interact closely with diet and lifestyle changes. This began my interest in the gut microbiome. Given the difficulty of studying the long-term effects of diet in human beings – self-reported dietary and nutrient intake collected from questionnaires and surveys are typically not comprehensive or standardized – I realized our close phylogenetic relationship to non-human primates makes them a more appropriate model for understanding the mechanisms behind the relationship between diet and the microbiome. In retrospect, this transformative journey has not only enriched my academic pursuits but has also fostered a deep-seated commitment to unraveling the intricacies of the gut microbiome.

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA ON OUR WEBSITE
Faculty and students in the Department of Anthropology join in mourning the passing of our dear colleague, Charles (Chuck) Lindholm, who died at his home on June 30, 2023. Chuck joined the University Professors program at Boston University in 1990 and moved fully into the Department of Anthropology in 2011, after the University Professors Program closed. Prior to coming to BU he had taught at Columbia and Harvard University.

Chuck was an influential and prolific scholar. He was the author of eight books, and his works have been published in six languages. His initial field research was in the Swat Valley of Northern Pakistan. The ethnographic study that resulted, Generosity and Jealousy (1982), established him as a leading scholar of South Asian studies and a leading theorist in the anthropology of emotion. He continued to publish on the region, but at the same time, his interests evolved toward work in the United States, and toward broad theoretical issues.

His work on idealization and leadership led to the publication of his well-known Charisma (1990), to an edited book on the topic in 2013, and to a number of articles on charismatic leadership and romantic love, as well as comparative studies of emotion. He also wrote textbooks on the Middle East, social identity, and the concept of authenticity.

Chuck was a dedicated teacher and beloved mentor to generations of graduate students and colleagues. Students and faculty were inspired by the breadth of his interests, which included photography, painting, music, and gardening, as well as academic scholarship.

Photos taken by Chuck Lindholm
In memory of Professor Charles (Chuck) Lindholm

In the days immediately following Chuck’s passing, four dozen remembrances from colleagues and students were posted on the Department website. That of Keping Wu (PhD, 2007) was typical:

I thought of all the pictures he sent us after his retirement, pictures of nature and of his own paintings. They were so full of appreciation and curiosity toward life, beautiful, ugly or cruel. I thought of his writings, on charisma, on love, and on authenticity. They had the same appreciation and curiosity: a scientist, an artist and a child, all at the same time….Thank you Chuck!

Professor Fallou Ngom, one of Chuck’s colleagues in the Department wrote the following:

I am saddened by the news about Chuck’s passing. I used to refer to him as the Shaykh due to his virtues, especially his decency, which I admired. Below is my last message on him in 2021. May his great soul rest in peace.

Yaa Shaykh al-Lindholmiyyu!
Your disciples miss you for your retreat is so long. Make us the pen you write with and the water of your ablutions. Bestow up again upon us your magnanimous gaze that purifies our lowly nafs! We miss you!
Fallou, one of your many Murids!

All of us owe a great debt to Chuck, both professionally and personally. In remembering him we keep his spirit alive and active in ourselves and the broader community.
Follow us on Instagram!
@buanthropology

Want to stay up to date on important Fall 2023 dates? Want to stay in connect with department going-ons during the summer? Follow us on Instagram to stay up to date on all the latest Anthro news!

News Submission Form

Do you have any news you would like to share with us? Now you can go to bu.edu/anthrop/send-us-your-news/ to tell us about it! We will update all news to our website, Facebook, Twitter, and compile them for our newsletters. Check out what everyone is up to at bu.edu/anthrop/community/department-news/

Student Resources

bu.edu/anthrop/student-resources/

The Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) for 2023-24 is Prof. Merav Shohet.
The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for 2023-24 is Prof. Kimberly Arkin.

Follow Anthropology in the Works @anthroworksbu!

Alumni Resources

bu.edu/anthrop/alumni-resources/

Want to be featured on our page? Fill out the Alumni Spotlight form. We will contact you when your spotlight is posted!
More news? Did we fail to include your achievements? Did we get something wrong? Please let us know and we will be happy to publish in a future newsletter.

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If you want to help support the Anthropology Department: