

Spring 2009

AnthropoLog

News from the University of Washington’s Department of Anthropology

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Of Course—Anth 269: The Anthropology of Rock and Roll

When people hear the phrase “rock and roll music,” artists such as Elvis, Chuck Berry, Bruce Springsteen, and Neil Young might come to mind. Most people do not immediately think of anthropological theories of ethnic identity formation or of 19th Century German political economists. But that’s not the case for the 230 students who were recently enrolled in ANTH 269: The Anthropology of Rock and Roll. They’re accustomed to hearing Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi referenced in the same breath as musical artists N.W.A., Santigold, and Bad Brains. Or in seeing their professor put a photo of Bronislaw Malinowski on the same Powerpoint slide as the shock-rocker G.G. Allin. “The Anthropology of Rock and Roll” is a new introductory course that uses examples of popular music as case studies to expose undergraduate students to some of the major concepts and themes in socio-cultural

anthropology. Most students enter the class expecting a lighthearted review of the history of rock and roll. Instead, through discussions of rock music, they get an in-depth exposure to some of the most serious issues studied by socio-cultural anthropologists, including racism, class struggles, homophobia, sexual violence, and drug abuse. In addition to learning about the connection between popular music and anthropology, the students also learn how to critically evaluate music production, including techniques such as overdubbing and studio mixing, to understand how music is recorded and how “culture” influences our interpretation of sound.

The mastermind behind this new course is our new hire, Full-Time Lecturer Jason De León. Professor De León is an economic anthropologist who has conducted archaeological and

ethnographic research in Mexico, Panama, and the United States. In his newest project, he examines the artifacts left by undocumented migrants along the Mexico-Arizona border to provide evidence for the economics of human smuggling and the life histories of Mexican and Central American migrant women and children. He hopes to include undergraduates in this research. A former punk rocker turned academic, Professor De León is excited to finally have the opportunity to bridge his love of loud amplifiers with political economy theory. His favorite aspect of the rock and roll class is convincing students that anthropology is something they can find everywhere, including on their iPods.

“ The Notorious B.I.G. would have a lot to say about Polanyi’s theory of embedded economics! ”

STUDENT COMMENTS ABOUT THE COURSE:

“This was my all time favorite class. ANTH 269 allows students to enjoy coming to class while learning important concepts that define our culture and other sub-cultures. Instead of ‘having’ to learn, the class makes us ‘want’ to learn. This is one of the most ‘real’ classes I have taken during my three years at the University of Washington.”

—Thomas Shin, Junior, Pre-major

“The Anthropology of Rock and Roll is hands down one of the best classes I’ve ever taken. This is the first time I’ve had a professor who managed to convey several important, serious issues while holding everyone’s attention and making us laugh at least once each day. While the content was important and I learned something meaningful in each lecture, it was really the way the concepts were presented that made them so interesting. Our professor was enthusiastic about his work and hilarious in teaching it. I would definitely take one of his classes again.”

—Christina Snailum, Senior, Anthropology

“I went into the course looking for an easy ‘cultural study of music’ class, and came out with a high appreciation and understanding of politically and culturally charged music and everything that surrounds it. I will not be able to watch another sexually violent music video or listen to a Marxist-economics-based hip hop song again, without analyzing and critiquing its background and cultural constructs. Professor De León does an excellent job at engaging students and demystifying society through his fervid openness and passion. It was a class I was sad to see end.”

— Kelly Thoma, Sophomore, Anthropology

“The most diverse and meaningful anthropology course I’ve ever taken, which was a result of Jason’s passion and personal knowledge of the topics of the course.”

— Steven Ritchey, Junior, Pre-major

“I thought it was a spectacular class that wove the culture of rock seamlessly into discussions of anthropology, addressed meaningful topics of human social organizations and crises with a mix of respect and humor. And yeah, it totally rocked.”

—name withheld

“This class shows you a new way to observe your own culture and the world around you. Even more so, you show up excited to come to class every day to see the different ways that music reflects culture.”

—Rebecca Wada, Sophomore, Architecture

“This course gave me a real sense of purpose in Anthropology in the modern world, the discourses impacting our lives that take place in recreational realms, and the important choices we make as music consumers.”

—Michael Galtney, Junior, Anthropology

“ Karl Marx would have loved hip-hop music! ”

New Faculty: Assistant Professor Ben Marwick

Ben Marwick joined the Department of Anthropology as an assistant professor in March 2008, coming to us from The Australian National University in Canberra. Ben began his career studying human behavioral ecology and environmental archaeology during the period 40,000-50,000 years ago in northwest Thailand. Since coming to UW, he’s been extending that work in a number of directions. One very exciting direction with great relevance for today

involves exploring the archaeological record for evidence of climate variability. Using a set of marine bivalves collected in northern Australia, Ben is looking at the changes in the distribution of oxygen and carbon isotopes throughout the mid- to late Holocene as a marker for changes in climate through time.

Other new research has taken him both further back and more forward in time. Further back in time, he is continuing his work in Thailand to examine hominin ecology and technology during the Middle Pleistocene. Later in time, he is working in the neighboring country of Laos as part of the Middle Mekong Archaeological Project. Ben has been involved in three field seasons of survey and excavation there to investigate the transition from hunter-gatherer to agricultural modes of subsistence. He is also reaching into later periods with recent fieldwork in the Lao National Museum in Luang Prabang, examining the craft traditions of bronze Buddha statues.

The final new direction for Ben is into Australian arid zone archaeology and geomorphology. In collaboration with one of his PhD advisers, he has been involved in three field seasons of

analyzing patterns in stone artifact scatters, surface geology and geomorphology in arid South Australia. The archaeology of this region is unique because of the very high density of artifacts and sites. Ben and his colleagues have developed a number of new mobile geographic information systems to collect and manage this richness of data.

Since arriving, Ben has taught courses in anthropology and archaeology, including the undergraduate honors class, ‘Archaeology in Film’, ‘Geoarchaeology’ and ‘Archaeology and Explanation’. The film class is one of Ben’s most popular classes. In the summer of 2008—while he was teaching the class for the first time at UW—he actually played the part of a professor of archaeology in a full-length feature film to be released later in 2009. In 2009 he will also teach a new course called ‘Mainland Southeast Asian Archaeology’. He is currently the Honors Program Coordinator for the Anthropology Department and affiliated with the UW Center for Statistics in the Social Sciences and the UW Quaternary Research Center. Welcome, Ben!

Ben Marwick (white hat) training Thai archaeology students in field survey, northwest Thailand





Note from the chair

Hello everyone! I am thrilled to be the new person offering greetings from the chair’s office in the Department of Anthropology. Last year acting chair Alison Wylie stated that it had been a year of transitions, with more in store. And I’m pleased to say that I am the final step in our chair transition process—what some have called “musical chairs.” I had the wonderful experience of working with former chair Miriam Kahn and acting chair Charles Keyes by way of serving on their executive committees, and last year with acting chair Alison Wylie by serving as her associate chair. They have all been tremendous role models and generous mentors as I have settled into this new position.

I’m delighted to have been part of the team that produced this 2009 issue of *AnthropoLog* (which includes Miriam Kahn, who founded *AnthropoLog* in 2001, our organizer-extraordinaire Steve Goodreau, and our talented graduate students Andrew Cowan, Mark Madsen and Lauren Rhodes). This same team spearheaded our 2009 Spring Outreach event, the theme of which was “Anthropology in Action.” This year’s event showcased the usefulness of anthropology beyond the academic setting and highlighted the public participation of several of our faculty members. Lecturer Holly Barker, who for twenty years has been working with Marshall Islanders, both in the South Pacific and in the Pacific Northwest, discussed her collaborative, activist efforts. She works with Marshallese who, after serving as unsuspecting participants and victims in U.S. nuclear weapons testing during the Cold War, are now speaking up to claim their

environmental and health rights. Professor Steve Harrell talked about his recent work in southwest China, which involves collaborations on social and environmental interactions around Yangjuan Primary School. As founder of the Cool Mountain Education Fund, he supports education as an effective means of promoting environmental stewardship and socioeconomic development in this rural community. And finally, I was our third presenter, describing how my work on female genital cutting in Africa has moved beyond its original focus on health consequences and cultural meanings to the realm of global politics. For example, I recently helped in the re-drafting of the United Nations policy on female genital cutting; I have also served as an expert witness in local asylum hearings.

This year we have celebrated several outstanding achievements of our faculty. Gene Hunn received the “American Publishers Award for Professional and Scholarly Excellence” for his new book, “A Zapotec Natural History.” Devon Peña was elected chair of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, the nation’s oldest and most prominent scholarly organization dedicated to the study of Mexican-origins people in Mexico and the United States. And in front of a standing-room only crowd at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Lorna Rhodes received the Society of Medical Anthropology’s Career Achievement Award. What an exciting year!

We are also very pleased to welcome two new colleagues. Sareeta Amrute has joined our sociocultural anthropology program. Her

dissertation, “Producing Mobility: Indian IT Workers in Germany,” explores how Indian information technology workers create circulating economies and sustain new forms of kinship and connectivity at home. We also welcome our new lecturer, Jason De León. Although his dissertation research at Pennsylvania State University focused on Mesoamerican archaeology, his current research and much of his teaching integrate archaeology and sociocultural anthropology in creative ways. He has added some exciting new courses to our curriculum, including “Anthropology of Rock and Roll,” which is featured in the “Of Course” section of this issue of *AnthropoLog*.

In this issue of *AnthropoLog* you’ll find news about some of our exciting curriculum innovations and recent events in the Department of Anthropology. We are, indeed, lucky to have so much to be celebrating, and are happy to be able to share this with all of you. And for those who enjoy receiving these updates, please note that next year we will be moving to an online only version of *AnthropoLog*. Thus, we ask you to help us update our email contact list by visiting our website at <http://depts.washington.edu/anthweb>. We look forward to staying in touch with all our friends of anthropology!

**Best,
Bettina Shell-Duncan**

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Your contributions can help launch a promising career, support research, and reward excellence in teaching.

In light of the need to tighten our belts and in an effort to become a bit “greener,” *AnthropoLog* will be moving to an electronic format in 2010. If you are an alumnus and would like to continue hearing from us, please be sure to update your contact information — including a current email address — with the Alumni Association. You can easily do so by going on-line to <http://www.washington.edu/alumni/membership/addresschange.html>. Similarly, if you are friend of the department, feel free to drop us a note at anthinfo@u.washington.edu with your current email address.

Your support of Anthropology is always appreciated, and with the current times, needed now more than ever. Please do consider making a gift to the department, if you can. Visit <http://depts.washington.edu/anthweb>, and follow the “Support Anthropology” link at the top of the page for more information. Thank you.



New Faculty: Assistant Professor Sareeta Bipin Amrute

One day in 2001, while she was a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago, Sareeta Amrute’s future dissertation project leaped out at her from the front page of an international newspaper. Germany, a country known for its strong science and engineering programs, was issuing temporary visas for software engineers. What especially caught her attention was that most of these engineers were projected to come from India. She immediately envisioned a project that spoke to the layered, complicated world that was developing all around her. Her fieldwork, which she eventually carried out in Berlin, focused on the “Green Card Regime” (as the temporary visa scheme was called) and how ideas about race and migration were changing in new multicultural Germany. She also wanted to understand how Indian IT workers made a life for themselves in labor and migration diaspora.

Her family’s history lies at the core of her interest in waves of migration from India. As she explains, “My parents taught me that even though the story of migration is often portrayed in simplistic

ways, in reality the diaspora experience is personal, varied and alive.” She decided to focus on computer engineers and all their unique complexity, in part because she wanted to see how transnational, temporary migration experiences affected the way in which young people from India imagined and lived their lives.

Professor Amrute’s research methods are motivated by her desire to go beneath the commonsense notion of things to understand the relationship between how people experience their lives and how those experiences then become part of greater phenomena. We often have an intuitive understanding of basic human needs and emotions, and we often understand the greater categories into which we compartmentalize our lives (the economy, society, ethics, law, etc.), but what we do not fully understand is how these relate to one another. According to Professor Amrute, anthropology is perfectly situated to make these connections. Ethnographic interviews are tools of the trade that can reveal the underlying assumptions that act as links between people and the worlds they

inhabit. Interviews also have a surprising ability to reveal unexpected ways that people imagine their lives and remake their worlds.

After receiving her PhD in 2008, Professor Amrute taught at the New School for Social Research for a year before joining the faculty at the University of Washington. Professor Amrute is currently writing a book based on her dissertation, tentatively titled “The Circulation of Capital and Code”. She is also beginning work on a new, India-centered research project, which seeks to understand relationships between service workers and scientists in India’s Information Technology complexes. She wants to explore the tensions between upper and lower caste and class workers that have arisen in the IT industry, especially around women in the workplace. She also believes that new more responsive technology-driven development projects can become possible through collaboration between service workers and IT shops. Drawing on her work, she has created an exciting new course entitled “Technology in Modern India.”

Drs. Peter and Amy Eby Establish the Gerald G. Eck Student Support Fund for Undergraduate Honors Students

The Department of Anthropology is pleased to announce the foundation of another new endowment to support our students. The Gerald G. Eck Student Support Fund will provide financial support specifically to our undergraduate honors students. Moreover, it will honor the distinguished career and contributions of Dr. Gerald Eck, who recently retired after thirty-three years of service to the UW’s Department of Anthropology.

Drs. Peter and Amy Eby established the Eck Fund to assist honors students with tuition, study abroad, research travel, and other expenses associated with education and building a research career. Dr. Peter Eby, currently an Assistant Professor of Radiology at the UW School of Medicine and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, received his bachelor’s degree with honors from our department in 1993. Dr. Eby initially chose anthropology for his major because he thought the subject matter was exciting. But when he took a two-quarter

upper-division course on human fossils and evolution from Dr. Eck, he was enthralled. The course quickly became his favorite. By the end of the course, Dr. Eck had encouraged Peter to sign up for the department honors program, and agreed to supervise his senior honors thesis on the evolution of the hominid pelvis.

Dr. Eby credits Dr. Eck with providing the encouragement and support that led him to medical school at Vanderbilt University. Upon returning to Seattle in 2000 (with his wife Dr. Amy Eby), Dr. Peter Eby completed a residency in radiology, and was asked to join the UW faculty in 2005.

When the University recently approached faculty with a “challenge grant” opportunity, offering to match donations 1:1 up to \$10,000, the Ebys jumped at the chance to give back to the University community. Dr. Eby specifically wanted to give to the Department of Anthropology because, compared to medicine, anthropology receives far less funding. As

Dr. Eby said, “Dr. Eck stood out as someone who really helped me at a crucial stage in my career and education. He definitely helped me succeed as an undergraduate, which facilitated my getting into medical school.”

If you’re interested in contributing to the Gerald G. Eck Student Support Fund, there are two ways to do so. One is to send a check (made out to “Department of Anthropology” with the “Gerald G. Eck Fund” listed in the memo line of your check) to the Chair, Department of Anthropology, Box 353100, University of Washington, Seattle WA 98195. Or, go to the department webpage (<http://depts.washington.edu/anthweb>) and click on “Alumni and Friends,” then on “Make a Gift,” and then on “View Other Funds for this Department.” We thank Drs. Peter and Amy Eby for establishing this wonderful fund. And we thank you for considering making a donation to it.



UPPER: The Eby family (L to R, Amy, Jacob, Peter, Morgan); LOWER: Professor Emeritus Gerry Eck (center) with four of his former students



Rachel Chapman (second from right) meeting with home-based care activists growing food and medicinal plants in Mozambique

New teaching initiatives in Medical Anthropology and Global Health

“Seattle is becoming a new center for global health research.” This headline in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* highlighted a major trend that has been developing over the last decade in our corner of the world, one in which the Department of Anthropology has played an active role. The number of faculty who work on health and disease from the molecular to the global level has been growing steadily, as have their connections and collaborations with other health research programs and centers in the Puget Sound region. The number of students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels interested in these timely topics has also grown. In response to these developments, the anthropology department recently launched a collection of new curricular initiatives, collectively called “Medical Anthropology and Global Health,” or MAGH for short.

Department Chair Bettina Shell-Duncan spearheaded the effort. “The department has a number of top-notch scholars working in this area, in both sociocultural and biocultural anthropology. We already had considerable course offerings, but found it was hard for students to navigate the many resources available. MAGH will help them integrate the resources in our programs with those around campus, and to have some recognition of what they’ve learned.”

For undergraduates, MAGH represents a “track,” or one way that they can select their coursework to develop a coherent set of knowledge and

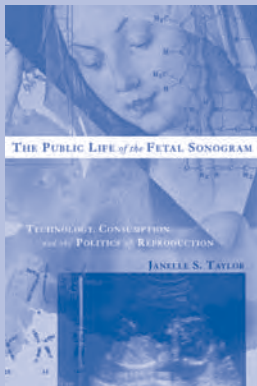
skills that cuts across the traditional sub-disciplinary boundaries within anthropology. Students can select from more than 20 courses relating to health and illness, and take the new “Capstone Cases in Medical Anthropology and Global Health.” The program is proving popular among students planning to continue their anthropology education after graduation, as well as those going into the medical professions. As *Newsweek* recently reported, social science majors have become increasingly attractive to medical schools because they bring skills that the health professions are coming to value more and more. Whether it be a greater understanding of cultural diversity, more familiarity with the evolutionary causes of disease, or an awareness of the political and economic contexts within which people make their medical decisions, health professionals with anthropological training are well poised to “treat the whole person.” For students wishing to take that path, MAGH provides ideal preparation.

Graduate students can approach the MAGH experience in two ways. One is as an undergraduate taking coursework that uniquely integrates approaches from social, cultural, medical and biocultural anthropology. A second is to enroll in the PhD /MPH concurrent-degree program. As Shell-Duncan says, “This program grew out of the awareness that many of our students were finding their own ways to take advantage of the intellectual resources in the School of Public Health. We wanted to coordinate the

effort and make it easier for everyone.” In the past, students who completed an MPH on their own along with their anthropology PhD have been actively recruited on the job market for both academic and applied health positions. According to MAGH faculty affiliate Rachel Chapman, “Next year is the first where the streamlined concurrent degree program will be in place. We’re already seeing a tremendously strong pool of applicants for next year, and we’re excited about the prospects.”

MAGH is just the first of a number of tracks that the department is developing to help students highlight themes within their undergraduate coursework. Others currently under consideration include environmental anthropology, transnational studies, and applied anthropology. Stay tuned for more information as these develop.

For more information on MAGH, including information on becoming a community affiliate of the program, please contact Steve Goodreau (goodreau@u.washington.edu).



UPPER: Recent research by medical anthropologist Janelle Taylor; LOWER: Benjamin Hanowell, hard at work in the Reproductive Ecology Laboratory Seminar

AnthropoLog
Credits

Faculty

Sareeta B. Amrute
Ann S. Anagnost
Laada Bilaniuk
Rachel R. Chapman
Angela E. Close
Jason De León
James K. Feathers
Ben Fitzhugh
Steven M. Goodreau
Donald K. Grayson
Stevan Harrell
Daniel J. Hoffman
Darryl Holman
Carol Z. Jolles
Miriam Kahn
Patricia Kramer
Peter V. Lape
Donna L. Leonetti
Marcos Llobera
Celia Lowe
Ben Marwick
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Jim Montgomery: original
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Professor Patricia Kramer Reflects on Lucy in Seattle

As I write this, the six-month run of *Lucy's Legacy: the Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia* winds down to its final hour. The people of the Pacific Northwest have been treated to a phenomenal experience, courtesy of the dedicated staff of Seattle's Pacific Science Center. As the exhibit closes, I feel the need to reflect on the excitement of being a part of it all.

The 3.2 million-year-old fossil specimen of *Australopithecus afarensis*, known affectionately around the world as "Lucy," was the star of the show. The importance of Lucy, and indeed of paleoanthropology, is that fossils give us a window into the world of our distant ancestors, in this case, an African world with animals and

plants that at first seem surprisingly mysterious to our eyes. But we soon connect ... to the young female who died in the prime of her life, to the three individuals who walked across an ash-covered meadow at Laetoli and left their footprints for posterity, and to the infant whose nearly complete skeleton was found at Dikika. Their stories become our stories. And, just think, if we are connected to Lucy, what does this say about our relationship to all the people with whom we share the planet?

Many colleagues, friends and students have told me what a memorable experience it was for them to see Lucy. But what struck me the most was the enthusiasm of total strangers.

Every time I visited the exhibit (which I did at least half a dozen times), people stopped and listened to me as I was explaining parts of the exhibit to the friends or family members I was with. These strangers pressed me with questions (that I was only too happy to answer): Who are you? How do you know that? Where can I find out more? Anthropology? What's that?

Anthropology, the study of humankind, of course unites all of us—current and past denizens of Denny Hall—who are reading this article. But my experience working on the Lucy exhibit reminds me that anthropology is best experienced, and serves as the greatest human connector, in the application of it. All the ridges and crevices on fossils, which so fascinate me, do so because they tell me a story of a life lived millions of years ago. Standing in the room with Lucy for the first time will always be a high point in my life, but Lucy's legacy is the telling of her story—of our story—to all of humankind.



The world's most famous fossil, known as "Lucy," has been on display for the first time outside of Ethiopia in the world-premiere special exhibition *Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia*. Courtesy of the Houston Museum of Natural Science



L: A reunion of paleontologists who worked at Hadar, including our very own Gerry Eck (left), held in conjunction with the Lucy exhibit; R: Patricia Kramer

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The Department of Anthropology would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our donors this year. Your generosity is crucial in allowing us to provide new opportunities for our students and faculty to learn, teach, explore, and make a difference!

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